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H. W. Taylor

THE WHITE DRUSE

AND

OTHER POEMS

By

DR. HENRY W. TAYLOR

Author of

The Romantic Story of Wickley's Woods, Leatherwood House, Etc.

ILLUSTRATED

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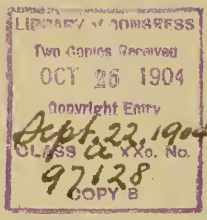

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TO THE PUBLIC.

This volume of poems, by my deceased husband, Doctor H. W. Taylor, has been prepared and published as a loving tribute to his character and genius. While I shall be gratified if my estimate of the worth of his poetry may be shared by others, and the volume find an abiding place in the homes and hearts of the people whom he loved so well, I can say in all truth that I have not been encouraged to this act of publication by the hope of financial gain from it. I have ventured upon this through no other motive than to preserve to Doctor Taylor's children, his family and his circle of friends a portion of the fruits of his literary labors.

In this work I have been assisted by Benj. S. Parker, one of the Doctor's faithful friends. Bespeaking the kindly interest of those who knew the author in life, this volume is lovingly sent forth without other apology.

Elizabeth P. Taylor.

PREFATORY NOTE TO THE WHITE DRUSE.

For this curious and interesting Romance in verse we are, probably, indebted to those rapid flights of reason or fancy which occupy the thoughts of young people in times of peril, and which seem to inspire both sexes, and society itself, with a spirit of unreason amounting, often, almost to frenzy.

The story deals less with florid passion than with those sudden discoveries of spiritual and intellectual affinities, the fervor of which may silence, temporarily, the pleadings of mere passion, and, sometimes carry young people away from what they imagined to be their sure anchorages of character and purpose, and entangle them in strange alliances, which, to the calm beholder, have all the semblances of mad-cap escapades.

The author, very naturally, having been a doctor himself, chose his hero from that generous, ambitious, and consequently, adventurous class of young physicians and surgeons that was so much in evidence in our volunteer armies, during the Civil War.

The heroine, or more properly the first heroine, for there are two in the story, each of whom displays an indisputable title to the name, appears to have been the girl-wife of a Tennessee mountain outlaw, upon whose head a price had been set, so many dollars for his return, alive or dead.

Though innocent of complicity in, or guilty knowledge of the crime, the young wife had fled with her doomed lord, and wandered with him, here and there, in hidden corners and along strange waterways, to avoid the fate which was pursuing him in the form of men more murderous than he, who were spurred on by the hope of gain.

One of these flights had led them far up the Wabash — "Indian River of the North" — where they had found a temporary hiding-place in the old log cabin on the Indian mound.

There the young wife and her child were discovered by the youthful surgeon, while he was on an expedition, with the fisherman's excuse, but in reality to enjoy a revel in the wild life and scenery of wood and stream. The little boy was ill and in need of the medical aid thus accidentally provided by the doctor's arrival.

The mother was but eighteen, golden-haired, beautiful, intelligent, adventurous, and skilled in the use of the slender oar and repeating rifle. More than this, both she and her hunted husband were dispensers of such genuine hospitality as their readiness as anglers and hunters made them the masters, though the husband possessed none of the refinements and graces by which the wife could make even a frugal meal delightful.

This much to the hasty reader, in the way of explanation, seems to be demanded by the rapidity with which the narrative hastens along in the flowing verse. The poem relates more clearly, perhaps, all that followed.

Every event is related with a rapid flow of recital, interspersed with curious reflections, bits of quaint philosophy and unhackneyed descriptions, which hold the reader's attention so closely that it may be, at times, almost difficult for him to retain the thread of the story. In the later cantos or chapters he gives a most peculiar, perhaps because so realistic, description of skirmish and battle in the wooded, mountain regions of the Tennessee, from the observation point of Union prisoners held within the Confederate lines.

The final denouement and the kindly, graceful chapter that follows it, reveal not only the generous soul and impulsive nature of the hero, but that of the regretted author, Dr. Taylor, as well,

while the songs with which the recital is interspersed are remarkable for their aptness and beauty.

But the reader may inquire: "Wherefore the term 'White Druse,' as applied to the heroine?" To answer in brief: "The Druses," as we learn from the Encyclopedia Brittanica and other authorities, are a peculiar people of Syria who cherish a strange and picturesque form of religion, which, however, seems to lead to purity of life and great hospitality. On account of this supposed purity of life the chiefs wear the White Turban as its outward sign. They carry the matter of hospitality so far that the French traveler, Volney, declared that he had seen the lowest peasants among them divide their last morsel of bread with the hungry traveler. If charged with imprudence, their only answer was: "God is great and liberal and all men brethren." "Whoever presents himself at the door of a prosperous Druse is sure of being entertained with food and lodging in the most generous manner." They do not practice polygamy and they are so honest that they deem it wicked to accept illgotten money for anything of value, or at all. Then they are said to be self-possessed and to cherish a delicate sense of appreciation of the wishes and feelings of others. But the Druses, like other Orientals, are revengeful of wrongs and relentless towards their enemies. It was doubtless the union of these several characteristics in the character and soul of "The Pallid, Golden Wanderer" that finally determined Doctor Taylor to confer upon this strange child of his genius the name "White Druse."

B. S. P.

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Our thanks are due to The Century Company for the following permission to use "The Rebel Yell," which originally appeared in that magazine:

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"You have our full permission to reprint 'The Rebel Yell' in the proposed volume."

We are also under obligations to other magazines, newspapers and friends for aid in the preservation of these poems, and other favors.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

The illustrations in this volume are all from drawings by Dr. E. E. Edwards, except "The Aigger" and "Billy in the Low Grounds," which are from hurried pen sketches by Dr. Taylor, while the Wabash at Fort Harrison and the same at Terre Haute are from photographs.

A REVIEW

[*Robert McIntire in Chicago Current.*]

Dr. H. W. Taylor, of Terre Haute, the popular poet of the Wabash, has a delightful bit of dialect verse in this week's *Current*, all the more appetizing to our readers because he quaintly compares our Ambraw River with the Wabash. Taylor does in dialect what the old Flemish painters did in color — paints old-time home interiors. His characters are the authentic Hoosiers, and the firelight falls as graphic on his cabin groups as it does on Ruben's peasants around the tiled hearths of Holland — the same rich glow, the same spectral shadows balefully nigh. There is a lusty stress and sweep of speech, with precipitate saber cuts of metaphor that cleave the pith at every stroke. His words fall like Ethan Allen's axe biting an oak to earth with a score of blows. He should be roundly abused for writing so little. His work is irremediably masculine, with a fine disdain of petty tawdriness. With a Hercules grip, he drags shrinking "Pole Beasly" into the light, and we fall roaring at the backwoods sage preaching a homily on "Locusses" or "Terbacker." But hear "Ole Pole" abuse our beloved Embarrass.

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Who some mighty work hath wrought
In the furnace of the brain;
Who hath framed some human thought
He may haply live again.

Who hath stamped a single page
With the imprint of his truth,
Shall enjoy, in every age
Endless heritage of youth.

If thou voice another's thought,
If thou draw unreal men,
Thou shalt in thy trap be caught—
Slain, forever, by thy pen.

H. W. Taylor

THE WHITE DRUSE.

Indian river of the north,
  Thy banks are robed in autumn glories;
All thy breezes wander forth
  Bearing thy romantic stories.

Tell me in thy liquid tongue
  How, in bold attack and sally,
All thy brown-armed warriors clung
  Desperately to thy fair valley?

Once thy waters, steely blue
  As the old-time silver mirrors,
Imaged back the war canoe,
  Bristling with barbaric terrors,

While the Indian summer smoke,
  Hanging low, as cloud of battle,
And the pat'ring nut-fall spoke
  As the distant musket's rattle.

Modern voices of thy plain,
  Echo, changing and renewing,
Bring them to my ears again
  As a weird and wild hallooing.

And the sumach's crimson glumes
  On the smoky hillsides scattered,
Fancy makes the drooping plumes
  Of thy wild tribes torn and tattered,

While the shocks of yellow corn,
By the harvest's ruthless pillage,
In the misty autumn morn
Seem the lodges of a village.

Here my lazy, white-sailed boat
Neath the maple's red pavilion
Seems in dreamy doubts afloat
'Mid the islands of Avillon.

Indian river of the north,
Gorgeous with thine autumn glories,
To me a day of thine is worth
All enchantment's brightest stories.

CANTO I.

O Wabash River! Still I love
To lounge upon thy sandy brink
And watch the water-grasses drink;
To see the white clouds pulse above,
And slowly, self-admiring, pass
As pretty maidens at a glass;
Or seem in slumbrous depths to lie
Far down in some blue nether sky;
And, too, I see inverted trees
With straightened branches dipping down
In depths where clouds and branches drown,
All gnarled and crooked, when the breeze,
Grown, suddenly, into a gale,
Spreads o'er thy face a veil of white,
As if it blanched in wild affright
At whisper of some ghastly tale.

Nor less I love thy darker moods
When from the glooms of summer woods
The storm bestrides his wingèd steed,
And rushing o'er some upper mead
From swift pursuers of the air
Headlong adown some iron stair
Whose sounding hardness at the beat
And clang of ponderous, flinty feet
The great shoes striking, hissing, molt
The incandescent thunderbolt.
While trembling with the mighty tread,
The earth enwraps her fearful head
And hides her from the blinding glare
In the thick blackness of the air.

And oft I mark, and love to mark,
Thy fair face in an instant dark,
When high thy foamy billows tower,
And seems thy fringing, willowy hair
To blanch and bristle with the care
And terrors of the awful hour.
Before some black, portentous cloud
The very day itself is bowed,
While rank on rank the veteran trees
Sink down upon their gnarled knees,
And sternly on the river's marge
There wait the cyclone's hurtling charge,
The dryad hosts that garrison
Thy spectral walls, Fort Harrison!

Nor less I love thy yellow floods
When pours the tiresome April rains,
And through thy budding lowland woods

Outstretch in wide and watery plains;
And then, a parting strand may loose,
And tawny, rushing waves uplift
The black-hulled pirate fleets of drift
Upon their annual seaward cruise.

And in the middle of the night
From Indian Orchard's lonely height
Beneath the night-cloud, in the rain,
I 've seen thee, like a wedge of white
That clove the darkened earth in twain
Till through the dim cleft, wide and far,
Faint gleamed the pallid Nadir star.

The red light on a moving train
Upon the verge of yonder plain
Seems some vast demon's lidless eye
That fixed on me goes gliding by
And, circling sidelong, still is bent
Upon my face with dread portent;
And though my senses loud protest
Its tame significance, it seems
All vain my fancy to divest
Of its vague terrors, as of dreams
That haunt the nights of childhood's time
In every age, in every clime.

O! happy as Avillon's Isles
This fair green prairie, walled around
With wooded hills that, miles on miles,
Re-echo undiminished sound.
And at my attic window laid
I 've heard some iron whistles shout
A wild halloo, that echo made

So strangely human none might doubt
Its origin were mortal, too,
So like a mighty voice it grew,
And like a chord in some old tune
On some lone woodman's viol played,
When ghastly beams from pallid moon
Through bare, cold branches crept and strayed,
Where crooked before a fainting fire
Some gray Orpheus of the wood,
With soulful hand this sweetest lyre
Touched tenderly, in plaintive mood,
And drew a sadder, wilder strain
Than ever flowed in learned lines:
He caught it from the sad refrain
Of night winds crooning in the pines.

Such sad and somber, piney song
I heard entranced long years ago,
Its liquid plainings streamed along
Like tear-drops of the fiddle-bow,
And in a dolesome legend ran
This tale of some "Lost Indian,"
Filled with a wild, despairing call
That rang in woodsy aisle and hall
And might have been the dreary drone
Of pines, where night winds croon and moan.

And so, when from its sounding throat
This engine whistle nightly blows
Its weird and melancholy note,
That answering in an echo, goes,
With frantic calls and faint replies,
I say, "Hark! the Lost Indian cries!"

Not that the instruments of sound
Are more melodious than elsewhere,
But wooded hills wall level ground,
The river broad and clear and fair;
The soil, deep underlaid with sand
That early borrows from the sun
Its summer store, ere cold upland
A tardier thawing has begun.
All these, and still a something more;
The far horizon seems to me
The blue line of a palmy shore
That gives upon a southern sea,
Or misty cliffs at whose dim feet
The limpid waves of some blue lake
In soft and restful measure beat
Too slumbrously to foam and break.

Deem you these dreamy fancies be?
Then is the southern mocking-bird
A dreamer, too, as from yon tree
All through the spring his song is heard.
What lures him from magnolia boughs,
Gay with their waxy, snowy bloom,
To where the lonely heron ploughs
A northward furrow turned in gloom?
There must be something in the air,
The misty prairie walled around,
The wooded hills, the river fair,
That makes this spot enchanted ground.

In such fair spot, in summer-time,
I tune, my brother, light along
The viewless wires of thought, a song,
And send it you, in rudest rhyme.

WABASH RIVER AT OLD FORT HARRISON

Thou, by "The Beautiful River,"
I, by the River of Sands,
May stretch out hands forever
To clasp but the shadows of hands.

As the twain, in legend olden,
Who walked, with a river between,
Where phantom bridges upholden
By mist, through mists were seen

Till there, in the fringe of darkness,
Where a crossing seemed sure to be,
Lay stretched in an awful starkness
The bight of a boundless sea.

So you and I have been roaming
In sound of each other's tread
From dawn of life to gloaming
Down to'rd the night of the dead,

With only a narrow river
Crooking along between,
And bridges of glass that shiver
Ere foot on a sill has been.

This lesson the story's yielded:
Rivers have aye been spanned
By beams that hands have wielded,—
And, have not we our hands?

Where Wabash with majestic sweep
Turns east upon the prairie mound
Where grimly from a graveled steep
Fort Harrison, of olden, frowned;
Where Lost Creek rising from its sands

And rippling gladly to the day,
Throws off its broken prison bands
And runs in joyous flight away,
There lies a stretch of lower ground
Deep shaded by those giant trees,
That first, Canadian boatmen found.
Unmoved by ripple of a breeze,
Unlighted by a summer beam
That falls upon the leafy roof,
It lies as shadow of a dream
In some dim under-world aloof.

There grow gigantic artichoke
And Spanish-nettle, armed to top;
There red wine of the crimson Poke
From bursting fruit falls, drop by drop,
And in the day the shy raccoon
Comes fearlessly to seek his food,
While in a narrow, deep lagoon
The wood-duck feeds her little brood;
And even in mid-winter times
When leaves their summer work have done,
Still, tangled masses of wild vines
Successfully defy the sun.

It is a place where mortal tongue
In secret awe grows strangely dumb,
As his, who waking, walks among
The vaults of some dim catacomb,
And sees along a shadowy wall
The forest twigs of blanching bones
That threaten momentary fall;
And through their stark, white branches moans

The spectral graveyard's clammy breath,
Damp with the heavy mists of death.

And where the lights and shadows play
There stands an ancient Indian mound
That strong hands toiling, day by day,
Wrought in a semi-circle, round,
And piled, on high, the mellow ground,
And deep and broad the bottom grooved
Whence the black loam had been removed
In days when all the land was new,
Nor trees on all the Wabash grew.

There once an Indian village stood
Upon this high, hand-builded ridge,
And like an arch of some great bridge
From its strong buttress, mocked the flood ;—
Where fringing willows grew about,
And held the wearing floods at bay,—
And heard the sentry's signal shout
That warned of floods still far away,
And saw adown the floor of night
Leap on and on the signal light,
While all the widened vale along
Went on and on the warning song.

The moon sails high
In a misty wheel
Of lighter sky,
And white smokes feel
Far o'er the plain
The coming rain,
And stoop and cower
Before the shower.

The hunters turn
On homeward trail,
When high the pale,
White torches burn.
Adown the stream
Swift paddles gleam
And birch boats bound
To the signal mound.

And brown floods fill
The valley wide,
From hill to hill
In stealth they glide;
But no sad sound
Is on the deeps:
Safe on his mound
The Red Man sleeps.

No lodge is on the mound to-day,
And great trees hide it from the sight,
But one lone cabin dares decay;
It sits upon the topmost height
As if it held a northward watch
As did the signal lodge of yore;
The string has rotted from the latch,
No hinges hold the leaning door —
Thick poplar puncheons make the floor —
It looks towards a vanished deep.
No longer on its wooded steep
Is heard the swish of yellow waves;
The Red Men slumber in their graves
And dream their life-dreams o'er again
Of sheltering mound and watery plain,

Of bright, far-leaping signal light
That bounds along the floor of night
And tells the tale to watchful eyes,
Of wild Wabash's sudden rise.
The cabin stands within a shade
As deep, as gloomy, as profound,
Almost, as that where crumbling fade
The Red Men's bones in yonder mound.
Before it, in a circling moat
Of shadow, lies a dark lagoon,
Where fleets of silent wood-ducks float;
Where comes to drink the shy raccoon,
And where brown muskrats deftly make
Their winter huts of grasses brown;
Where slips the spotted water-snake
From branch of bending willow, down
Where some deep-throated, hidden frog
Grinds out his hoarse, batrachian cry;
And from dark tree tops dim and high,
And at night's noon, the great horned owl
Calls to his mate with hooting cry
Or swoops on flocks of duller fowl
That daz'dly in the dark woods fly.
There shy wild turkey, tall and black,
Left in the sandy marge his track,
Or scratched the leaves from brown earth bare
And gathered fallen wood-nuts there,
A plentiful and dainty fare.
I followed these when but a child,
Just through life's longest, first decade;
They spelled me with a charm so wild
It lured me to the deep wood's shade.

Day after day the yielding snow
Held, side by side, the prints of feet:
The many are alert and fleet,
The broader ones more dull and slow,
And all into the forest go.
And close behind the setting sun
Comes slowly back the plodding one,
Bearing upon his shoulders broad
The thing of wings, a lifeless load.

And this is but the olden tale
Of steadfast plodder, toiling on,
Who wins the prize ere day is gone
And bears in triumph, still and pale,
The adversary, who at dawn
Flew with the pinions of the wind,
And left competing feet behind.

And then I learned a love of woods
That sways me in my later days,
And still can lure my feet away,
Wherever shaded silence broods.
On mossy log if I may stand
And push some tangled vines aside
I feel the wood-craft in my hand;
My feet no longer step, but glide;
No twig may snap beneath my tread,
A watchfulness is on my head,
A strange alertness in my ear;
The falling of a leaf I hear.
No sound is with my deeper breath,
I move as silently as death;

My right hand grasps a phantom stock,
My thumb rests on a shadow lock,
And o'er my eager features plays
The spirit of my hunter days.

Now the snow is down,
In the woodland hollow,
Where the leaves are brown,
Where the hunt I follow.

Softly! Softly! feet,
Twigs must be but bended.
If one snap, I weet,
This chase soon is ended.

There's a spot of brown
Patched upon the whiteness
Of the feather-down
New snow's misty brightness!

Brown oak leaves, but then
'Neath the snow were lying;
On its top, again,
Something sends them flying.

Hist! What shade is yon,
Gliding there, so quick it
Is but seen and gone,
In the hazel thicket?

There another, tall,
Like black cameo showing
On the whiter wall.
Ha, that swift step slowing!

Noiselessly my gun!
Set no lock a-snapping,
Roar you now! Ha! one
On his back a-flapping!

Great black toes in air,
Aimlessly are clawing;
Wings that beat and tear,
Blood the snow is thawing.

Anglers love to lie
Of the weight of fishes,—
Ne'er did feathers fly
Heavier bird than this is.

Long my step, and light,
Let who will be boasting;
Ere the fall of night
I shall smell the roasting.

Thus did I sing one August day
When from the city's stifling heat
I beat a panting, slow retreat.
Unconsciously I took the way
That led me through the shady ground
That skirted then the Indian mound.
I felt the fall of shadows cool,
I scaled high walls of fallen trees,
I crossed the log-bridge o'er the pool,
I felt the ripple of the breeze,
I gained the mound, and there, before,
I saw the open cabin door.

And as I looked, my languid eyes
Swung open with a swift surprise,

As on my startled vision broke
A slender spray of blue-gray smoke
That downward curved in this green gloom
Like some huge sleeping giant's plume.

I saw, too, on the hardened earth
That formed the cabin's ruder hearth,
A steady, cheerful, yellow blaze,
Such as the rafters saw in days
When hunters sheltered from a storm,
Or axe-men built to dry and warm.

I felt a flush of foolish fear,
Reminded of all hideous tales
Of men who strangely disappear
Nor come again in any year.
As ship that under pole-star sails
They glide beneath this sombre wood,
And here, mayhap, they sit and brood,
The unseen, winging things I hear,
To thrill me with this sudden fear.
But "foolish fear" I may not say,
Who thus pronounces on his moods
Knows not the soul that in him broods;
Sees not his spirit's pinions play.
These heart-throbs are the startled wings
The all-divining spirit spreads,
When mortal eye nor sees nor dreads
The swift approach of fateful things.

No sound of voice nor step comes back;
Nor rusted button from a coat;
Nor hat upon a pool afloat;
Nor brittle bones, mildewed and black;

Nor pointless word of penciled note;
Nor bit of boot out of a fire;
Nor shred of cloth clutched by a brier;
Nor waving handkerchief on bush;
Nor spot of beaten, trampled ground,
By curious searchers strangely found
And viewed, and viewed in whispered hush,
As if the hunted dead were there,
And words might melt him into air.
They step as quickly out of life
As if, upon its utmost ledge,
One stride had borne them o'er the edge.
They make no feeble sound of strife,
They draw no furrowed brows in frown,
As they who grasp and gasp and cling
Tenaciously to that sweet thing
Which we call Life. They slide swift down
The Tarpeius of Oblivion,
And in a fleeting breath — are gone.

And I, while gaily hummed the town
Her work-day song, in busy mood,
Might in a spout of brain-fire drown,
While in my eyes the red light flashed
And through my brain some bullet crashed
And sense and sound grew all subdued
To the faint dronings of a dream,
Beside this misty, sluggish stream.

And even so I contemplate
My moveless figure lying there.
That look of sadness desolate
On pallid feature, frosted hair,

The lines upon my forehead, fair,
Drawn slowly in by Time and Care.
And in self-pity, thus, I grieve
That Fate has sent me no reprieve,
But let my last sands swiftly run,
With my best life-work but begun.

The years that lead to Middle Life
Are as the dawning of the day ;
Half-lights enshroud the entire way ;
We waste our strength in bootless strife,
We stumble, too, at every stride,
And fall upon the self-same stones
That broke our predecessor's bones.
We turn in every path aside,
And all the years of youth we waste
Retracing steps we took in haste,
And only from the Mid-Life-Knoll
Can we walk straightly to the goal.

I would not walk my way again
If 't were to gain the fount of youth.
The nerves I have are used to pain
And I have learned some bitter truth
That seemed so sweet in earlier times.
I bend not to a chilly blast,
As I bent in the tender past.
I walk all seasons and all climes,
Nor let the keenest prier see
How sharply winter pinches me ;
Nor how the burning summer ray
Makes me to faint upon the way.
I stand upon a higher plane,

The chill plateau of self-command;
And yet I would not climb again
For all the wealth of all the land.

But while such thoughts my mind ran o'er
A figure passed athwart the door,
And back and forth again it went,
As on some varying message bent.
But, still, the darkness of the room
The trial of the eyes defied
Nor left me able to decide
If man or woman glided there,
Across that space of lighted air.
I was not left in doubt for long,
A little scrap of baby-song
Rose plaintively along the wall,
Attuned the sounding logs among,
Adown the trees to die and fall;
To faintly fall and sweetly die
A plaintive, baby lullaby.
It was a mother's boding lay,
And fitted to a mournful tune
Such as my grandam used to croon
Far back in my own baby day.
It filled my heart as with a flood
Of tender yearning and regret—
Were not my lids an instant wet?
I started, faltering, and stood
A moment, and then moved again.
My heart still felt a weight of pain.
Or, rather, in my memory sprang
The sense of some forgotten pang,

And you have felt the same, I know.
There is an herb, that long ago,
Grew green beneath the leaves and snow,
Of sweetest smell and emerald sheen,
I know it still as "Winter Green";
It grew upon a lofty knoll,
Close by the huge and mossy bole
Of a tall, spreading chestnut tree;
And any autumn day could see
Two children — O, so very small!
Their shoulders scarcely reached my knee,
In shadow of the pine trees tall,
And where the hemlock branches made
A deep and melancholy shade,
And feathery spruce hung on the ledge
High over the swift torrent's edge,
That far below in foamy rills
Broke through that narrow pass of hills.

No merry laugh nor childish shout
From that lone mountain spur rang out;
No sound a note to echo gave;
No echo startled silence, save
The rustle of small, booted feet,
Among the beds of sleeping leaves,—
The brown cock-pheasant's lonely beat,—
The low sigh that the pine tree heaves,
And the complaining undertones,
The voices of the mountain stream,
That in a dull, oppressive dream
Make murmur at obstructing stones;
All else is noiseless and subdued,

And shadowy tree and misty bush
Lean in a warning attitude
And ominously whisper—"hush!"

So this lone mother's lullaby
Brought back to me a faded day,
About a low house, old and gray;
The half-light of an afternoon;
A childish voice—a baby's cry;
A wrinkled grandam's soothing croon;
The tip-toe of the sick-room tread;
A weeping-willow drooped and bent;
A road that o'er the west hills went,
Whence, one by one, a black coach whirled
Us, far into the outer world:
And so a mother's lullaby
Wakes in my heart responsive sigh.

I stood without the sodden sill,
And rapped upon the broken door.
She started; stood a moment still:
A flush her pallid face came o'er,
Then faded whiter than before.
A dreading, questioning surprise
Flashed like a fire in her blue eyes,
And as a fleeting paper flame,
It went as quickly as it came;—
Her eyes had read my soul aright.

"Will you come in?" she simply said;
"My husband's absence and the night,
That falls so soon in this strange place,
Make me afraid." Her glorious face,

THE CABIN ON THE MOUND

Bound in a sheaf of yellow hair,
Like cockleblooms in ripened wheat,
Gave her a tender, girlish air,
Sad, but beyond expression sweet.
I told her I had heard the song
That hushed her fretting infant's cry,
While in a mood I walked along
Beneath the sheltering sky of leaves
That this tall forest thickly weaves
Below a burning summer sky.

"This cabin and myself are friends,
We made our friendship months ago,
And here my evening ramble tends
Where summer's pulse beats ever slow.
My duty leads me to the sick ;
Your boding song, the baby's cry,
Pierced all my instincts to the quick,
And I am here ; and this is why."

"A doctor!" Like a day of June,
A fair, swift, eager, brightening day,
The glow of her fair feature's play ;—
"Was ever hap more opportune?—
Some angel must have heard my prayer ;
Or, if the days of fairy chance
Were elsewhere than in sweet romance,
I would be tempted to declare
The angel stands in person there."

She pointed in her pretty mood
Where, blushing like a boy, I stood,
And then she laughed a laugh that took

Fresh merriment from her bright look.
Entranced was I, her face to see;
Like some old friend she greeted me,
And with swift utterance told the tale
Of all that might the baby ail.

In fact he was a puny child,
With eyes so large, so dark and gaunt
That even now my dreams they haunt.
Last night I saw them wide and wild;
As was their wont, the pale lips smiled
And bravely hid the gnawing pain
That almost rent his heart in twain.

I quickly mixed the milder draught
Known to our gentler modern art;
With feverish hands he seized and quaffed;
His grateful look went to my heart
And bound me to him with such bands
As weave their woof with loving hands.

And she, the mother fair and young!
With that quick fluency of mind
Which marks the cultured and refined,
And voice as sweet as that which clung
And rippled from the mock-bird's tongue;
The paradox was on my face,
Of such a woman — such a place!
I thought; I could but think of her
As from some planet, new and near,
A moment resting, flitting here,
The Pallid, Golden Wanderer! —

But now there came a rapid foot,
That lightly, firmly struck the ground,
And rasped the sill with scraping boot.
My lovely hostess, turning round,
Smiled, a slow smile I tried in vain
To analyze. It was not pain
And yet not pleasure, nor surprise.
I saw his look inquiring rise
Up from the floor to meet my own,
As she, in sweetly murmuring tone,
Told him in accents soft and low
A story that he seemed to know;
For still his eyes of steely blue
With piercing glances looked me through
Till, seeming partly satisfied,
He came with quick, determined stride,
Took with strong grip my proffered hand,
In thought, a moment seemed to stand
While his keen eye, still on me bent,
Searched through my soul for its intent.

He said, "I 'm glad that you have come!
My wife is farther from her home
And friends than she is wont to be;
This wood is not her Tennessee;
The shadow of this lonesome place
Has dimmed the brightness of her face.
She made me moody all day long
With crooning of some foolish song;
You haply came to us; and now
The clouds have vanished from her brow.
May all your future comings be
As haply timed for her — and me!"

He said this with a churlish look
And something hid and sinister,
As if his words and actions were
Part of a general plan that took
A furtively suspicious way
Towards everything that near him lay.
And, too, I saw a sort of bound
Whenever he did seem to hear
Some slight unusual sight or sound;
His eye, his ready hand, his ear,
Did seem to start, or forward press
In watchful, strained attentiveness.

I think, with self-derisive smiles,
At long remove of time and miles,
How then I thought, and half did speak
As privileged, because so skilled
To thought of stranger, nervous, weak,
With idle twilight terrors filled.

And so of us, the keenest eyed
That ever into faces pried,
Pass idly, inattentive by
Men, who, if deeds could rise and cry,
Had held us in a horror-trance;
As if some thoughtless, casual glance
Had shown the kitten, which each day
Does with our babies skip and play,
On sudden, gaping, murder-mawed,
Huge, glaring, tiger-toothed and clawed.

I listened to his churlish word,
And marking, too, his timorous bent,
Yet nothing of him saw or heard.

His inner self still came or went,
As absolutely unrevealed
As if in ocean's depth concealed.
"Amen to that," I laughing said,
"Your babe a potent charm has laid
Upon me, and I call my skill
To aid my pleasure and my will;
And, too, my duty — not in vain
We well may hope — and soon again
We'll see him merrily at play;
But now I note the autumn day
Fades out; and night is coming on,
And I must with the sun be gone."

"O, no," my hostess quickly said,
"We keep the ways of Tennessee;
At supper hour, who here may be,
Must still remain and break our bread;
However oft we change abode,
Our habits keep the olden road."

There seemed to be a bitterness,
And meaning in her tone and look,
That set me purposing to guess
Which way her silent musing took.
And thus my thoughts she seemed to read,
And gaily said: "You must not heed
Environments, nor ways of speech;
I have within my easy reach
Such resource you would scarcely dream —
The yield of forest, field and stream.
You wonder if our cabin fare
May with your showier board compare;

You see upon the cabin's side
Our several implements of trade:
Those nets upon the wall, I made,
And some are new and some are tried;
And this one held a noble fish,
A monster salmon, but to-day;
I think you are about to say
Some very ill and clumsy jest—
They *all* are clumsy at the best—
Of what just such a fish should weigh;
We may discuss him in the dish,
If we are of a single wish.
And swinging from yon sturdy joist,
You see our light, new painted boat?
It is a beauty when afloat.
On its slim mast I love to hoist
A very high, capacious sail
That drives it like a prairie gale.
That boat is yet so very light
I carry it upon my head,
And swing it, as you see, at night
A hang-bird's nest; a rover's bed.
And when our darling little one
Grew faint beneath our southern sun,
And it was deemed his life was worth
A journey to your bracing north,
And we discussed the many routes,
He leaps up thus, and fairly shouts:
'O! mamma, take our pretty boat
And let us down the river float,
With pretty masts and oars and sails,
Like children do in fairy tales.'

The thought pleased us as well, and we
Upon the broadening Tennessee,
Did sail or row adown the stream,
All hidden from the summer beam
In banks of shadow, cool and dark,
That saw our light and graceful bark
Speed swiftly on its northward flight
Day after day, night after night,
Until far up the blue Wabash
We saw the leaping salmon dash
The spray about in foam, and plash.
We felt the prairie breezes give
New promises of joyous strength,
That after anxious days, at length
Our darling boy should thrive and live.
And here we found your cabin, and —
But you now, doubtless, understand
Our story, illy told, and brief.—
You have observed how little 'talk'
Serves to impede a woman's walk!
And while our story I did tell
My fire has done its work as well.
A box lid for an added leaf,
And so you see my table spread;
And now the host will take the head;
You like your salmon slightly brown?
These wood-ducks roasted to a turn?
And here are dainties from the town,
Some melting bread of Indian maize
For which the cook expects much praise;
And should the pleasures of this feast
Hold us beyond the sun's last ray,

I pledge you from the wood, at least,
You shall be led some safer way
Than that you followed here to-day."

She had a way of talking on
Nor waiting for the least reply
Save nod or smile or glance of eye;
And so the meal was quickly gone.
I spoke, with some attempt at jest,
"Beyond a doubt, it was the best
I ever set a tooth upon."
And then my hostess gaily said:
"'T will be to us the greatest boon
If you, awhile, we could persuade
To share our woodland meal at noon
Or evening." "Since we are so loth
To part with you, I vote for both,"
The husband added; "for your cheer
I would that we might keep you here."
The wife laughed, flinging back her hair,
And glancing at her sleeping boy
And then at me with eyes that shone
With love and gratitude and joy,
And, too, a touch of brooding care;
And there was something in her tone
Held me a minute there alone
Ere laughingly I passed without.
She cried: "I seriously misdoubt
We've fed an angel unaware,
And you will vanish in the air
Nor come again in night or day."

"What! winging all my fish away?"
The husband chimed in merry play.
"Then can you say some hours hence,
'T was most cherubic false pretense?
Shall I not go along to show
The better way?" "We both will go,"
The wife declared, and tripped along
Humming a golden bar of song;
And at the opening of the wood
She stopped the song she had begun,
And said, "We promptly lunch at one
And dine at six. Be prompt; be good;
And you will die"—"Before my time?"
I say; "so goes the ancient rhyme.
'T will be false prophecy in sooth
That dooms me in my bloom and youth."
She answering said: "Who can descry
The fates that just before us lie?"
Her pallid face, an instant sad,
Was with an effort brightly glad.
We said "Good bye!" like olden friends
Or kindred who but meet and part.
Ne'er friendship had such speedy start
That grew so swiftly to such ends.

CANTO II.

It is a fashion of our clime
To change its seasons in a day;
The yellow warmth of summer-time
A night may turn to wintry gray;

One hour the autumn asters bloom
In sheltered hollow, 'neath the hill,
The next, a Borean blizzard's boom
Shakes all the forest with its thrill.
One day the blackbirds gaily try
Their concert of melodious song;
The next, a snow-storm drives along
The wild goose and her warning cry;
And oft a day in early spring
Beholds the melting of the snow;
The next will hear the blue-bird sing
And watch the first wild daisies blow.

And I, that breathless August eve,
Saw where a dull and sickly sun
His subtle yellow web did weave,—
Across the west horizon spun.
I, dwelling on the Wabash, knew
The legend that these slant rays drew
The waters from the river's bed,
And in returning showers shed,
For one, a thousand in its stead.

So, when the dullard morning broke,
With noiseless blows, my window-pane,
Upon the slated house-top spoke
The countless voices of the rain.
I, on my elbow, listless leant
And heard the rushing of the gust
That on the roof its thunder spent,
That beat the raindrops into dust,
Which from the wet walls rolled away
In undulating waves of spray.

I saw the smoke-spires downward bent,
I saw the swirling floods that roared
Where flooded eave-trough flushed and poured;
And as a broad and yellow sheet
Of water, stretched the level street,
That onward bore a sailless fleet,
Which like the hurrying fleets of men
Sailed, some away, some back again,
And boxes, barrels, sticks of wood,
And oyster cans of Baltimore,
In heaps of moldy straw, the floods
Left stranded on some farther shore.

Down every alley, every lane
Where festering germs of death are bred
To gnaw in fever's burning vein,
There rushes with a noisy tread
And purpose, nothing may deter,
Earth's all-sufficient scavenger.
And here a gleeful, mellow shout
That went a-ringing through the town,
Told where they safely hunted down
A pool of Agues, wan and brown,
And bore them, on swift shoulders, out
In the deep stream to sink and drown.

And here in whispered gurgle, low,
They push and surge about a door
Beneath a damp and rotting floor,
Where in a noisome moisture grow
Those throttling poisons that a night
May loop around some slender throat —
The halter of the diphtherite;

Or burn the scarlet moxa in
Some little infant's tender skin.
Each cried to other cheering calls,
They surged and swirled above the walls,
They downward poured upon the floor,
And, instant rising, swiftly bore
Their pinioned prisoner, "La Garrote" —
The dreaded Demon of the Throat.

May friendly currents never cease,
In day or night of any year,
Their forceful struggle with disease
Until disease shall disappear,
And men shall walk until they die
Without a twinge of ache or pain!
This is the duty set to try
The busy people of the rain;
And this fair river leads them on
In their good work — till work is gone,
While narrow-visioned men may see
Wabash as some dread enemy,
Full well I know his merry train,
The little people of the rain —
And sing to them a new refrain:

Malignéd river! on thy sandy bank
'Twas said Malaria held perpetual sway
O'er oozy marshes, dark and damp, while dank
And matted weeds shut out the light of day.

And in the darksome shadow of thy woods,
Soundless, save hum of gnat or croak of frog,
There wan and pale and shrunken, Ague broods,
Hugged in his reeking, shivering cloak of fog.

And even in thy warm and glistening sands
Of tawny yellow, flecked with white and red,
There raging Fever tosses his hot hands
And burns forever in his fiery bed.

Falsehood hath made of thee this ribald jest
Whereat men smile as at some death-watch wit,
A fleeting smile that pauseth not to rest
And hath a serious shadow following it.

Yet art thou fair as summer morning's dream
Bright with the loveliest shades of coolest green,
And musical as that far Orient stream,
Beloved Phar-Par of the Damascene.

In all the world no lovelier vision lies
Than this round bay of prairie at thy marge,
As bright as when the voyageur's dark eyes
Beheld its beauties from his birchen barge.

The sunny land of song hath lent to thee
Her dearest notes; and in the spring is heard
From topmost bough of every budding tree
The sweet, wild warbling of the mocking-bird.

Thou hast thy pools that grim and silent lie
'Neath overhanging trees that watchful keep
The bodeful secret of their mystery
Within their whisp'ring shadows dark and deep.

But most I love thy white and sunny bars
Fringed with green willows where the heron stands,
And darting minnows gleam like shooting stars,
And water-turtles delve among the sands.

There, on a pleasant summer day like this,
Deep in the willow's shade I love to lie,
And hear the roving ripples slyly kiss
The water grasses leaning coyly nigh.

The west wind stirs the quivering cotton-wood,
High in the air a winging heron flies;
In a shy cove a wood duck leads her brood,
Upon the north sky's rim a white cloud lies.

I hear the rush of a bald eagle's wing,
From weed to weed a spider's web is spun,
Slow from yon wood the lazy breezes bring
The muffled roar of some far sportsman's gun.

On a dead level slowed the day
Toward the thickening western mist
That the lone prairie stooped and kissed,
And then held on a darkening way
Veiled in a slanting sheet of gray;
As if a mourner at a grave
Stooped to bestow a last caress
Upon her dead; then hopeless gave
The cold lips back in loneliness,

Into the small hands of the dust,
Grimed with life's mildew, and its rust,
Then slowly took the homeward path,
Rent with a fierce and voiceless wrath.

Somehow, the feeling grew in me
The day was not what it should be;
I would have had a mellow sun,
Framed in a sky of yellow blue,

Had winds like truant school-boys run
The cotton-wood's rough branches through,
Or loiter idly in the shade
By drooping, leafy beech boughs made;
A fleece of clouds that lightly skim
Along the north sky's outer rim;
Some dun grasshopper's airy hum
Of sun-drunk, sweet delirium;
The dancing dervish of the weeds
That naught of his surroundings heeds
But madly upward flies and flings,
In spasms of his yellow wings,
Until he flutters down to die
On some lone stalk, bleak, chill and high.

Yet rainy days were never wont
To fret me thus; at other times,
The bursting of the cloudy font
That kept me from the world aloof,
Below the shelter of my roof,
Did gladden me with tunes and rhymes;
While loud and swollen grew the brooks,
I turned me to my meagre shelf,
Unclosed the windows of my books,
And climbed away above myself,
And peeped into the hearts of kings,
And held the lives of mighty men
As they had held all lesser things,
With careless, self-assuring clasp
That grew into an iron grasp,
Or softened to a sweet caress
Of growing, glowing wantonness.

There was at first a shadowy thought
That made a steady, swift advance;
Though hard and bitterly I fought,
It bore in rest a conquering lance
That brushed aside my skirmish line—
Each work-day thought and plan of mine.

Awhile, upon some outer hill,
Its growing pennon gaily blew;
And soon it stood upon my sill,
And ever nearer, nearer drew,
Until before my conscious eye
It boldly challenged some reply.

In vain my lips of outward scorn
Question, and questioner resent,
Neither will one small jot relent,
Nor wound a parleying bugle-horn,
But this sharp-pointed message sent:

"What of the cabin in the woods?
What of the stranger's changing moods?
What of the infant's slender life?
What of——No! Let that one go by.
Ha! Will it then the louder cry?
What of the mother and the wife?
The mother lone that walks and sings
Like winds that sigh on silken strings?
The wife with sheaf of yellow hair
That floats and glimmers on the air?
The woman with the starry eyes
Set in a milky-way of skies?
Again, and what again of her,
The Pallid, Golden Wanderer?

"Stands she at that small, narrow loop
Of daylight in the cabin wall?
Her willowy form in pensive droop,
Whose curving lines of beauty fall
Like trailing vines upon a green,
Or weeping-willow at a spring,
Or beechen boughs that downward lean,
To hear the gray ground-sparrow sing,
While lifts and falls her yellow hair
At every throbbing, pulsing stroke
Along the rain-white, misty air,
As if the golden artichoke
Could see her, sweetly leaning there—
The soulful beauty of the place—
To fling its blossoms o'er her face
And down her sloping shoulders fair,
As though the weeds must e'en confess
The charm of angel loveliness?
Again, and what again of her,
The Pallid, Golden Wanderer?"

Then spoke I, in quick self-defense
From Conscience—self-accusing thought;
And brusquely, and with some pretense
Of angry indignation, sought
To bar all further inquiry,
As one resents an injury:
"Persistent questioner of me,
It seems absurd you can not see
Of all earth's creatures there is none
Beneath the rain-cloud hidden sun
Has on my thought and time less claim;
My duty calls me and I go.

And surely I would do the same
For poorest poor and lowest low."
His look did follow mine awhile;
He pried and pried into my eyes;
His lips curled with sarcastic smile,
And with keen irony begun:

"And yet her hair is like the sun
That streams through rifts of cloudy skies;
Her sweeter tones like those that clung
And rippled from the mock-bird's tongue."
He turned his prying face well down
And looked up through his lashes brown,
Then laughed a short, sarcastic laugh;
"You know yourself too well by half
To be thus fairly self-deceived.
And who outside would have believed
These thoughts of thine that all day fell
Like wheeléd vessel in a well,
That drew the same draught up again,—
A pot of honey often spilled,
Sweet flattery, as oft refilled,
To work its pleasings in the brain.
I see you thinking how she said,
'I fear' (so archly!) 'we have fed
A very angel unaware,
And you will vanish in the air
Nor come again'"—
"You give offense;
This is a bald impertinence!"
I answer hotly, deeply pained
And with an anger all unfeigned.

"What flutters is the wounded bird —
A quaint old saw, you've often heard,—
It ever is with such a spurt
A mortal shows a mortal hurt.
I am your elder dual — born
When first the world beheld the morn;
I lack your heritage of pain;
I grieve not at your loss or gain;
For loss and gain are foolish terms,
And prematurely, man affirms
That which no mortal man may know,
Till final summing up shall show.
Nor would *you* grieve could you behold
The very utmost thread of life
Here broken by a stroke of strife,
There far and peacefully unrolled,
And either issue uncontrolled
By anything of mortal mould."

"It is outside, beyond belief
That man is but an autumn leaf
And whirled about in every blast,"
In frenzied mood, I wildly gasped.
"Is man then blown about the sky
Like yonder clouds above the trees—
The plaything of a fickle breeze,
Of things he neither hears nor sees? —
And is the legend all a lie,
The story of the changeless soul?"

A quick, percipient look he stole:
"You know me as your Better Self,
A lie upon an inner shelf

Somewhere between the heart and brain,
And there I much prefer to lie
Save when as now your vexing cry
Calls me to make your augury;
And yet my words that do convey
The crystalled wisdom of all years
You lightly take and throw away,
And, after, pay for them in tears."
He looked away; and then I said:
"If you could only me convince
I'd follow, and be not afraid."

"Ha! I shall make you flinch and wince;
Could you my questioning evade?
Have I one false prediction made?
Did not each shaft from my bent bow
Into the golden center go?"

"But how could I be deemed to know
The very truth of what you told?
Know that your shafts would strike the gold?
Who knew not archer, shaft nor bow?"

"I might as well be fast asleep,"
He said, half keeping back a yawn,
"These bootless vigils that I keep
Hold me from nightfall till the dawn.
I teach my lesson o'er and o'er,
You've heard it many a time before;
I tell you that the ways of men
Are not of arbitrary rules,
They were not made in formal schools;
They had their small beginnings when

The human creature first began.
'T is true, indeed, that boastful man
In every age has gratified,
In full, his overweening pride,
By saying, and believing, too,
The very root of growing laws
First in his own conception grew,
Himself the very primal cause.
Lycurgus voiced the common thought
Of common men of that far time :
No new and gracious thing he wrought.
His laws, no doubt, were set in rhyme
And through the common life were veined,
Like ribs and veins of oaken leaves,
Ere Minos cased his thighs in greaves.
But bah ! I chatter as some guest
At well-spread table, kindly pressed ;
You know I have small interest
In what befalls you, worst or best ;
And yet you walk with inward look
And with an automatic tread,
With clasping hands and bending head,
Thinking percutient thoughts, that shook
Where sweetly dreaming I did lie,
Drew me to question and reply;
Unprofitable augury !"
"What shall I do? O, Better Self,
Your augury shall not be vain !"
"You have your books, as I my shelf ;
Make them your only friends again."—
He said this with a look of pain.—
"The higher comradeship of mind

Still yields unvarying content,
Mere mortal friendships still are bent
By fickle ties that lightly bind.
Deceit and falsehood and their kind
Hold o'er the human heart such sway
That love and friendship both betray.
Leave them yet in your mortal day,
And turn with me far, far aside,
Where but the sweets of thought abide;
There make your peaceful home; there stay,
So in a time of dreamy ease
The flood-tides of your measured breath
May flow down placidly to death,
As rivers widen to far seas:
This life so calmly, peaceful wrought
The wisdom of the Sages taught."

"And must I look no more on her,
The Pallid, Golden Wanderer?" —
I, laughing, questioned, half in jest;
He smiled and murmured: "It were best;
But now there comes a step, a ring
Will end our mutual questioning.
A voice and smile can well defy
All power of human augury.
Good-bye! Days, may be years, you'll weep
That I, to-day, go back to sleep!"
He spoke, and mistily the door
Gave his dim shadow to the floor;
A far horn on a hill-top blew,
And into space the Shadow drew.

Did I not feel he spoke the truth?
I knew his words were crystal cold;
And, when the world began, were old.
But O! the hotter blood of youth!
It is the torrent rushing down
Where serest wisdom dips to drown;
It is the seething, whirling pool
That turns the head of sage and fool;
'T is the enchanted sea that floats
The merest gossamers of boats;
The mountain river broad and grand,
That, wasting in a plain of sand,
Can learn no lesson of the past,
With sands still striving to the last.

What would I with Sage?
He is set too thickly.
Like a wintry hedge,
Ugly, gray and prickly.

Like a wintry hedge,
Summer, set to watch me,
From its raveled edge
Reaches but to scratch me.

Some men die too old,
Who long in terror hold you
With assertive, bold,
Perpetual "I told you."

One thing I 'm settled on,
I 'm happy at the showing
That some old men are gone
Who yesterday were going.

And when I reach the age
To wag my head and mutter,
I pray some youthful sage
Will pitch me in the gutter.

Whilst I this heartless ditty sang
In self-defiant bravado,
A nervous hand the door-bell rang,
I heard some foot-steps come and go,
I heard some wordless, spoken tones,
A voiced pitched high; a voice pitched low;
I heard a step upon the stair
That rang as if it mounted thrones;
'T was at my door, it waited there,
And thence there came a flut'ring knock
That struck upon me as a shock.

You, too, have felt it, as a fear
Of something that would take no form,
But stood menacingly, and near,
As stands a cloud before a storm.
Sometimes it seemed the shape of men
Who sought you with averted look;
Who rode behind you in a glen;
Or waited for you in a nook,
Beside some sullen, shaded stream
Like that which compassed you in dream;

Or watched you in a hurrying crowd
With oft-recurring, furtive glance
That looked not straightly, but askance;
Who spoke; but never spoke aloud,
But whispered as apart they drew,
And made you feel they talked of you;

While hands that hid their ugliness
Deep in dark pockets of the dress,
Held there, concealed from every eye,
Some weapon known to treachery.

Sometimes it was a viewless thing,
That only sought you in the dark,—
That did a ghostly shadow fling
And ever stood erect and stark,
Or followed with a stealthy track
Within a hair-breadth of your back,
And while you felt impelled to flee,
It forced you still to turn your head,
Although you knew that you would see
Whatever shape you most did dread,
But chiefly of the shrouded dead.

Sometimes it was a man who came
Veiled in a fancied mystery:
He said but little, left no name,
But asked for you, and wished to see
You at some designated spot;
And when the time came, he came not,
No whispered speech his wish expressed;
He left his errand to be guessed,
Vanished from sight and went his way,
And not a foot-print on a road
Left evidence of where he trode;
The fright he gave did longer stay;
Both were forgotten in a day.

Sometimes it was a single track
Beneath your bed-room window made;
You watched to see the foot come back,

And sleepless on your bed you laid
A throbbing head that strained one sense ;
You heard a thousand meaning sounds
Within the house — about the grounds ;
You toiled without a recompense,
Night after night you planned your plan ;
But plan and vigil are in vain,
For all the knowledge you may gain.
The very pre-Adamic man
Might there have set a wandering foot,
Save this was cased in shoe or boot,
But it has served a purpose, still,
To worry you and make you ill.

I said these vigils are in vain,
And yet, who knows that this is so?
Who knows of the averted blow,
By presage warded oft? Again,
Had Cæsar heeded the portent
And omen of his statue's fall,
Would Brutus' knife have struck, at all?

The superstitious saws of old,
That, publicly, we like to jeer ;
The auguries we lightly hold,
Would give the Ancients cause to sneer,
Could they behold our modern craze,
The grim portent of fateful days.
I know that every dire event
That threatened fortune, honor, life,
Was presaged by exhausting strife
Between my better self and me ;
And when he has been forced to flee,

Some sudden, dire mishap befell,
As thunderbolt from cloudless sky.
I should have learned to heed full well
The meaning of my augury;
And it may be I did rebel
Against the terrors it imposed;
The specters that my path enclosed,
Returning courage did resent;
But left my rashness to repent.

Or it may be implanted in
Our hearts to hate authority;
The virus of the primal sin
Still does ferment in you and me.
The highest creature of the earth
Can own no master among men;
He, proudly, asks the why and when
Of all earth's forces—all its laws,
Interrogates the Great First Cause,
And if an answer be denied,
Rebels, or is dissatisfied.

But now the knock upon my door
Grew more imperious than before.
I lifted first a secret lid
Where ready weapon lay, half hid;
I felt a quick, electric thrill
That shook my frame as with a chill.
You walked with me on many fields,
O'er shot-torn carcasses of men;
Our shoulder-belts our only shields;
We saw the foemen's gunners, when
They threw aloft their signal hands

That lit six blazing, leaping brands;
We heard the dreaded roar that woke
The quaking terrors of the ground—
The very buried dead of sound—
We saw the serpents of the smoke;
Each launched a lightning tongue of flame,
And with a horrid hissing came
A thousand iron bullets' whirr—
The harsh, air-rasping canister.

And now, in soberness, I say
I felt less deadly fear that day
Than when I walked across my floor
To open my beleaguered door.

I opened it—saw smiling there
The woman with the Golden Hair!
My terror was intense as brief,
I felt the pleasure of relief
So poignantly, I could but clasp
Her fingers in my fervid grasp;
I spoke some disconnected word,
That I were glad she had not heard;
I felt as from a direful dream,
That held me in all time and space;
A joyous summer morning's beam
Had wakened me with warm embrace
And left me listening to the song
Of birds, the orchard boughs among.
She noted something of my look,
And yet affected not to see,
But pantingly did speak to me:
"Your musings are indeed profound;

I thought, enchanted, you must be
In subtle toils of magic bound.
Have I dissolved some occult spell?
Or, thoughtless, broken well-laid charm
By which you make the ailing well?
Or keep the well from threatened harm?"
And following my waving hand,
She sank into an easy chair.

"You thought that I would have you stand
A very age, in waiting there?
But I was in a study, brown,
And you might almost batter down
The very brick walls of the house
Ere I could from abstraction rouse."

I spoke thus, standing at her side,
Her eyes half closed, then opened wide;
I saw a sort of conscious look,
That swiftly flew across her face,
Like cloud-shade on a placid brook;
Like passing cloud it left no trace,
Unless, perhaps, it still did lie
Far in the depths of her blue eye,
Half-shadowing a lightning flash
Of secret triumph, or delight,
Through intervening space did dash,
Then flickering, vanished from my sight.

I think my half-unconscious gaze
That fixed itself upon her face,
And every lineament did trace,
It was that set her cheeks ablaze,

And made her silken lashes stoop
To kiss the cheeks in loving droop,
And so, I asked about the child;
She looked up at me, brightly smiled,
And said: "This was your strongest spell,
We feel that he is almost well.
I left him as the nurse in charge,
While I rowed down our paper barge
To get some needful things we lack,
And, will you, nill you, take you back?"

She paused and drooped her pearly lids,
But did not cast her glances down;
She seemed to force a pretty frown
Upon her brow, as one who bids
An all-unwilling face to steel,
With seriousness it cannot feel,
And through her fringing lashes took
Some hidden measure of my look.
"If well, what need that I should go?"
She started, laughed and—"Don't you know?
Have I so wastefully indulged
My sex's privilege to scold
That I, so far, have not divulged
My errand—or have backward told
A simple, plain, straightforward tale?
At eighteen, if my memory fail,
What shall I be when I grow old?"
She saw the laugh upon my lips,
And raised reproving finger-tips,
And in pretended anger spoke:

"You know that ugly heap of logs
Where you your neck so nearly broke?"
"The drift, you mean?" "Across the bogs,
Or as you term it—the lagoon;
You crossed them yester afternoon."

She paused, mischievously amused
At my perplexed, abstracted air;
She could not know that, standing there,
I all unconsciously recurred
To meanings of her tone and word.
I noted, with a sort of thrill,
How she had picked my phrases up,
And this is flattery's sweetest cup,—
The acme of the courtier's skill;
The very blossom-tip of praise,
To imitate our words and ways;—
A flattery that may farther reach
Than any other form of speech.

A look of mocking, great concern
Did o'er her mobile features spread,
Her brows did gather dark and stern,
And slowly shaking her bright head,
And looking grieved and sad, she said:

"As I, all night, have dreamt and feared,
You saw us not; but yesterday
An angel came—but in your guise,
With softer accent, I should say,
And, too, with sadder, brighter eyes;
He came, and blessed, and disappeared:
I seek him now throughout the land."

Then I began to understand,
And smiled shamefacedly, while she
Sat laughing in a charming glee;
A little boisterous — to be sure;
Therein spoke my discomfiture.

"The logs you mentioned? then, I say:
What of them?" "Well, 't was but to-day
My husband, footing that same way,—
A way he seldom tries to go,
And one which you much better know,—
Did get a very ugly fall
And"— "Broke a leg?" "Yes, with a ball.
His pistols make an ugly load,
Which he bears ever, day or night,
Awake, asleep, at home, abroad;
Upon the river, or the road.
I fear — but, then, it is not right
I thus should speak. He never sleeps,
But some half-slumbrous vigil keeps,
That is so light, so strangely light;
The drops of rain that softly plash
Upon our narrow window-pane
Will startle him awake again;
The breeze that shakes our window-sash,
When silent, quiet he has lain
For hours, breathing soft and low,
Will rouse him up, and he will throw
At once the coverlets aside,
His eyes will glare and open wide;
His weapons clutched in both his hands,
At one swift bound erect he stands;

Then he will tell me, it did seem,
That robbers stole me, in a dream!
This strange, unreasoning wakefulness
Has wrought upon me, these two years,
Has tinged my evenings with distress;
My days with anxious, boding fears.
And — what was I about to tell?
O, yes! One fired when he fell;
The ball went in below the knee
And made an ugly wound to see.
He said 't was nothing — a mere scratch!
Would not consent that I should go
For you. But I — I slipped the latch,
And on pretext of needed stores,
I took my boat — my lighter oars,
And swiftly down the stream did row.
And this is all that you can know
Until you see him. My light boat
Is near. I 'll help you with that coat!
A rain-coat best this weather suits,
And you will need your rubber boots."

And thus she rattled on and on,
She flew like light about the place.
I noted after we had gone
How her quick eye had singled out
The hiding-place of every wrap
With which the clothiers us entrap,
Which lay or hung, concealed about,
In that inextricable rout
Known to a bachelor's retreat.
I never was so soon equipped,

Not even when I heard the beat
Of the long roll at dead of night,
Or when the bugle, brazen-lipped,
Forewarned us of the sudden fight.

When we were down upon the street
Her hand clung lightly on my arm,
The rain rushed merrily to meet,
But surely not to do us harm;
It seemed so jocund and so warm.
She clung so closely to my side,
As if she sought to shrink and hide
And shelter her — and not in vain —
From slanting arrows of the rain;
And so I drew her closer still,
And threw myself against the wind;
I breasted every air-blown rill
And made an eddy in the stream,
A sheltered spot where she did seem
Dry-shod, to walk, in peace, behind.

And where some houses, black and wet,
Across the street, were squatly set,
I felt her hand compress my wrist,
Not tenderly. Though I were vain
Enough to feel a sort of pain,
I knew it for a warning twist
The second time she gave it. "Hist!"
She griped my arm again, and said;
I looked and saw her lowered head,
Her flashing eye and burning cheek;
Surprised, I was about to speak
When, in a voice so low the sound

Scarce reached my quick, attentive ear,
She hotly spoke: "Don't look around.
I see some slinking hounds are here;
For days they 've hung upon my track;
I 've seen them thrice, to-day, before,
They hunted me quite to your door,
And it would seem they hunt me back.
They lurked about the cabin till
I hardly dared to cross the sill.
But in the evening's friendly shade
I thought to easily evade
Pursuit—till rowing towards the town
I saw them pulling swiftly down
A narrow slough that, crooking, kept
The high bluff's brushy foot along.
They strove my flight to intercept;
But my light boat, the current strong;
Some willow boughs that blocked the slough
And made them force slow passage through;
All these gave quiet to my fear
And left my hounds far in the rear.
I, like Diana, led the chase."

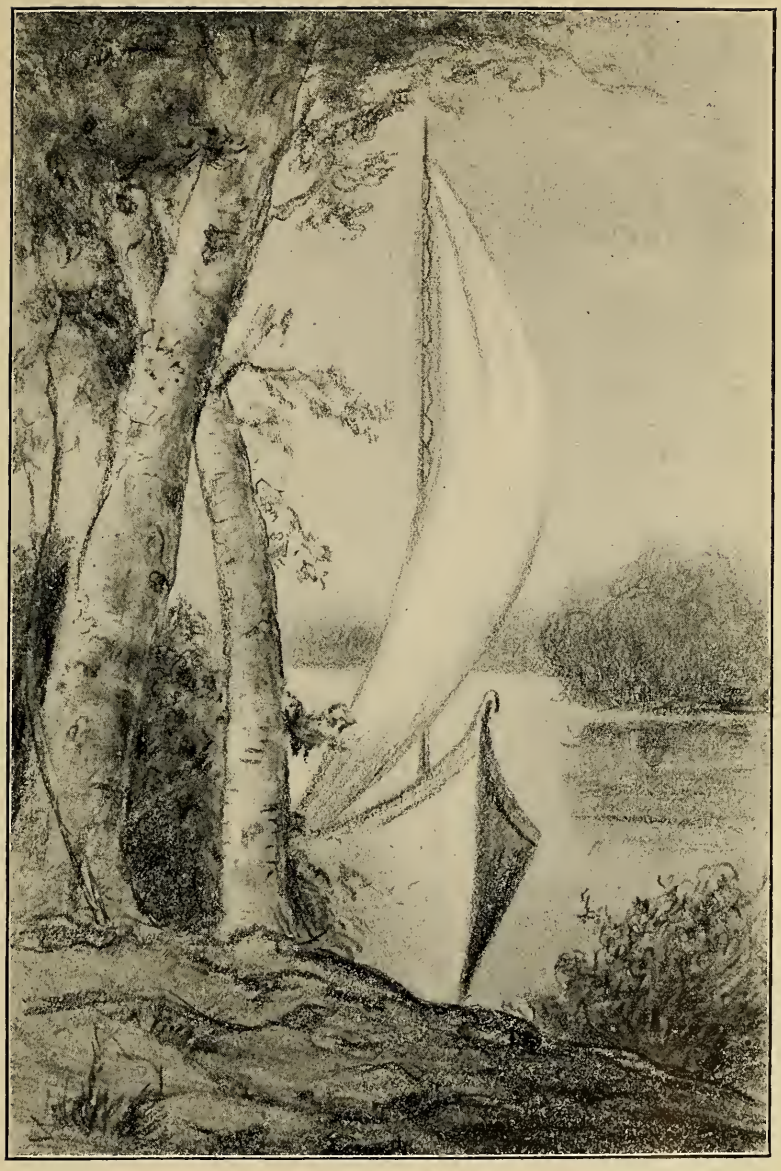
She laughed, looked up to me in quest
Of recognition for her jest.
"And they are cowards, cruel, base!
There should be some swift punishment
For men who, with such bad intent,
A lonely woman will pursue."

"You do their actions misconstrue,"
I, slowly pondering, stared and said,
With turning and returning head.

"The Devil should receive his due.
I surely think you do mistake
Whatever errand these men make."
Awhile she made me no reply,
Then in a colder, harder tone,
While her bright eyes still brighter shone,
She queried: "Will you tell me why
These all-considerate gentlemen
Persist in dogging me, at all?"
She let her hand a moment fall
In anger from my arm; and then
She softly stole it back again.
I warmly pressed it there, content
With this tacit acknowledgment.

"I fear I am misunderstood,"
I said; "their purpose is not good
Nor yet what fairly you surmise.
I know I'll challenge your surprise
By speaking of my curious gift,
Or may be it is only lent—
Swift as a glance is, just so swift
I peer into a man's intent.
His tongue may, afterwards, persuade
My reason that my heart was wrong.
His soul cannot my look evade.
And while we've talked and walked along
I've looked our stealthy followers through
And found—well, that they don't want you."

By this time we were at the boat,
And in a moment more afloat.
The wind had shifted south and west



THE BOAT

And blew a steady, roaring gale.
She cried: "You 've heard of the 'wet sail,'
Or sheet—and wind that follows fast?
Well, this must be just such a blast.
Look! Farther down, along the shore!
You see my hounds are taking oar!
But oars can never match my mast!
I think I was a sailor born;
I love the water as a friend,
Or as the song-birds love the morn.
I would live thus unto the end!"

She ceased, and stept a slender spar,
Ran up a broad and flapping sheet
That seemed a prisoned wing to beat.

"Sit there!" she said; "you would but mar
My sailor work. I led a fleet
Of yachts through Pensacola Bay,
And I can do as well to-day!"

Our boat did but an instant drift,
Seemed from the yellow flood to lift,
And, through a bank of rain-white spray,
Like frightened wild-duck flew away.
So quickly had the river swelled
The banks no more the water held,
But, everywhere, the tawny flood
Poured through the green and leafy wood.

Like some black, many-tunneled ridge,
The iron arches of the bridge,
From their dim, over-hanging height,
Looked down upon our rapid flight.

And now the evening closing down
But indistinctly glimmering showed
The lamps and lanterns of the town
That one by one flared up and glowed,
All pointing toward our foaming path
As if the city rose in wrath,
And fixed its thousand yellow eyes
Upon some fast escaping prize.

When from our northward course we swerved,
And where the river westward curved,
She said: "If you will take my glass,
Ere we yon willow headland pass,
You 'll see, if you the river scan,
How much my friends admire my plan;
But I have now no shade of fear—
They see I have protection here;
And how I wish that you would take
A month's vacation, for our sake;
I know you could no better do
Than throw your duties all aside
And with us for some weeks abide;
My craft can add you to its crew,
And you can sail or row at will,
Alone or with—whome'er you like.
There 's game to hunt, and fish to strike;
It matters not a lack of skill;
The skill and sport, I 've cause to know,
Are in an inverse ratio.
And when you tire of rod and gun,
As man will tire of everything,
(I mean not this for covert fling)

My hammock swings where never sun
Looked down on lazy swinger yet;
There you your labors may forget,
And sleep and snore — for man must snore
Or die, I 've heard it said before.
No mortal shall your snorings curb;
I will be sentry, night or day,
And at an arrow-flight away,
That no intruder shall disturb
Your meditations nor your rest.
I have the books you love the best,
I know you love them — for they stood
Upon your office table, there,
In short reach of your easy chair —
The poets, great and small and good; —
But see yon clumsy sailors, how
They sail a skiff, as 't were a scow!"
She laughed, and leant towards the stern;
I felt her breath upon my cheek,
So hot it made it flush and burn,
Or something did — and I did speak:

"With such fair sailor as are you
I would I were your only crew,
And this enchanting voyage to last
Until eternity were passed."

There flashed a look into her eyes;
Nor sorrow, anger, nor suprise,
Nor pity — yet a medley, too,
Of all these bound in royal blue.

Her head she quickly did withdraw,
Her cheek flushed transiently with shame;

She caught her sheaf of yellow hair,
As if it had been much to blame,
And in her hood confined it there.

"You did not tell me what you saw."

I saw, distinctly, naught but her,
Hulled in her flutt'ring gossamer.
I saw my words she had revolved,
I saw that these had done their hurt;
Her heart's blood to her cheek did spurt;
I saw, too, that she had resolved
To give no color of offense,
Or hide her hurt — at all events,
She smoothed from off her forehead fair
The new-ploughed furrow of her care,
Rebuked me with an absent air,
As if she put me from her, quite,
And at some distance infinite.

"I saw? Why yes — I saw a rag
Of dirty white — the half-mast flag,—
A sort of signal of distress,
No doubt, as meaning to express
Their disappointment and chagrin
To lose, or see a woman win."

I said these words in bantering tone,—
I hardly recognized my own,
So strange it sounded in my ear,
As from the woods, or not so near.

A vexing thing is memory,
A disappointing mystery;
It has no hold on beauteous things;

Its angels, all, have speedy wings,
Its flowers, in a fiery flash,
Burn to the black, unsightly ash;
But O, as if in iron moulds,
All hideous images it holds,
And long and vividly does spread
Before this never-closing eye
Of lidless, blood-shot memory,
Repulsive pictures of the dead.
The eyes, that living, never wept,
The lips, that living, ever smiled,
Our after memory should have kept
Their beauteous gladness undefiled.

I rode down Mohawk's silver stream,
Grassed from the hill-tops to its edge
With carpeting of emerald gleam,
These are faint pictures of a dream.
But one dark mass—a stony ledge,
All crumbling, ruinous and old,
Stands out, distinctly cut and bold,
As sharp to-day as then, no less,
By reason of its ugliness.

And never does a day go by
Or bright or dark across my track,
But morn or eve, I try and try
To call two baby faces back.
I strive to call them back at morn,
For day's young hours saw their birth;
I strive to hold them at the eve,
For then night did about them weave
Her somber mantle, gray, and torn

With many a rent of dripping cloud
That from the heavens wept and bowed,
In mockery of those who mourn;
But if their faces come to me,
They come in some sad, hopeless dream
Distorted with that agony
Of final sorrow, and supreme.

Is it that we still live too near
The world's old days of dread and fear,
When all the teeming air of life
Was black with hate, with murder rife,
That Pleasure, yet, has no pretense
To Registered Experience?

And so, *her* look I can't recall,
Although she was the only bright
And glowing thing on that gray wall,
That stood between us and the night.
Her words: "In that you better know
What motives in *men's* heads may grow;
Perhaps you too acutely guess
Why these pursue me, hour by hour,
With such persistent doggedness
As makes me fearful of their power,
And so appeal from them to you,
Unwitting in what court I sue?"

I flushed in anger and did pout,
Then said in bitter, cutting jest,
"I have no doubt your husband best
Could follow such inquiry out."
It was a very Parthian shaft,

And winged with an ungentle string,
That sent it whirring, quivering,
And yet, to my surprise, she laughed.

At what? Why, heaven only knows!
As politician newly beat
Philosophizes on defeat,
I can do nothing but suppose,
And I suppose that there are some
Who are not tender to my flint;
You well may thank me for a hint:
If you would have a life-time mate
You never might be made to hate,
Take her who laughs when you are mad
And at whose anger *you* can smile.
You may sometime be grieved or sad;
For joy and grief are rose and thorn,
One not without the other born;
So not a shade of guile or wile
Can grow such mated pair between,
Nor cloud their calm sky and serene.

Life's sweetest cup wouldst quaff?
Then pray the gods to mate you
With her who makes you laugh
The more she doth berate you.

And if she be a scold,
And make no end of chaffing,
You never will grow old
But youthful keep with laughing.

When time's powder, gray
O'er your head he sprinkles,
You 'll have had your day,
And she will have — your wrinkles.

I hummed this ditty to an air
Quite fitted to a merry song,
She laughed still as we flew along.
At last, when we were almost there,
She said in low and earnest voice:

"I needs must say I had no choice —
Or I did think so — but to tell
My persecutions, but to you
And ask your counsel what to *do*,
Or let it, *make* it, darkly rest
Within the shadow of my breast;
But now behold our cabin fire,
It blazes there a welcome bright,
The paler nomad's signal light."

The latter words she seemed to say
In absence — looking wide, away.

Then: "If the servant's worth his hire,
In warmest corner you shall dry;
I have some fish and ducks to fry,
And such a supper you shall take
As, I think, finally will make
You your restaurateur forsake."

The boat now rasped along the sand;
She quickly seized and pressed my hand;
The smile that bloomed upon her speech
Now faded, flitted out of reach:
"What I have told, and you have seen,
Of dogging men and following boat,
Please say no word and take no note;
So shall we all more soundly sleep
If you my secret safely keep."

She cast a fleet, appealing look,
Furled the wet sail, unstepped the mast,
Sprang to the shore, the boat-chain took,
And in an instant locked it fast,
Then grasped some packages, an oar,
Turned, sprang toward me, turned again,
Then flitted through the veiling rain,
And looking back, went on before,
I following to the cabin door;
Nor aught I saw, nor aught I heard,
Save her impulsive act or word:
Veiled in the rainy, twilight haze,
So saw I them in after days.

CANTO III.

A week is not a thing of days,
And such a period may wear
A sort of strange, eternal air.
So indescribable this phase
Of what we simply know as time,
It seems to me a thing of clime;
Or, rather, season; for the fall,
With its first wind that moans and grieves
In showers of autumn-tinted leaves,
That week does vividly recall;
And, too, the redder glow of morn,
The blue of Indian Summer smoke;
The rustling yellow of the corn;
The muffled roar of engine stroke;
The wild-goose mellow, conching note;
The grating cry of rising duck;

And Sandhill Cranes so still and high,
They do not seem in air afloat;
But tangled in some solar thread,
With backward slanting wings outspread,
Seem each a cleaving arrow-head,
Where Saggittarius had struck
The golden center of the sky,
In burst of matchless archery.

But most our River of the Sands—
For this the Indian title means—
In every ripple of its flow;
In every tuneful murmur low,
Made where a gold-twig willow leans,
As if by happy, trailing hands,
Beneath whose tender soulful touch
The gladdened waters trill along
In tiny, limpid waves of song,
Does still recall by, O! so much
Six halcyon days of this fair Fall;
The sweetest, bitterest of all.

Of all, I said! Are they not all?
Life is a thing of few events
And they not born of wise intents:
The coming, and departing breaths;
The births, the marriages, the deaths;
These are as moss upon the wall,
As mistletoe upon the trees.
Each life has one great episode,
Of all the world, he only sees
Who feels Love's thrilling accolade;
Or writhes beneath the stinging goad,

The scorpion lash of torture, made
By disappointment and regret,
In this dire order sadly set.

A day of summer beauties, strange
And fascinating as my dream
Of some green Southern ocean stream;
Where circling isles around me range,
And white-winged birds above me fly
Against a bluer, nearer sky.
So when the glimmer of the day
Foretold the rising of the sun,
The rain and clouds their work had done,
And there the Wabash bottoms lay,
A glittering stretch of golden seas
With flowery isles of autumn trees;
It might have been a nether sky
Where gorgeous clouds of sunset lie
In flaming red and yellow sheaves,—
So gleamed these cumuli of leaves,—
And through the alleyed water-ways,
That curved or crossed about the wood,
Each sunlit current of the flood,
In joyous movement, runs and plays
With that exhilarating power
That ever seemed to me, in truth,
The spirit of the morning hour;
But well may be the special dower
The gods bequeath to early youth.

This thought leads to another thought:
The poet's finer heart and brain,
Though pierced with keener pangs of pain

Than are on other natures wrought,
Still holds throughout his fitful life—
What richest compensation yields—
That joy in waters, woods and fields,
That like the love of faithful wife,
Still does its sweetest pleasings lend
All undiminished to the end.

At this fair morning hour I rose
From my soft pallet on the floor.
I saw the open cabin door,
And fully rousing from my doze
I sprang with conscious thought contrite:
How had my patient passed the night?
How did he rest? How fared his wound?
Instinctively my way I found
Behind a curtain to the bed
With true physician's noiseless tread,
And looked with wonder and surprise;
And looked again; and rubbed my eyes
In serious doubt that he was gone,
Till sunlight, following the dawn,
Showed, plainly, in its wonted spot
His vacant and unrumpled cot.

A step, I think, I then withdrew;
And turning there, one look I threw,
All search, all movement did forestall;
I saw within the swinging yawl,
Within this airy hang-bird's nest,
Upon this golden rover's bed,
A sight I vividly recall:
One arm beneath her golden head,

One white hand on her bosom pressed,
Among some fairy, feathery lace,
Not fairer than her pallid face
And not so fair—not half so fair
As her white bosom rising there,
And lovelier far the veining blue
That dimly streaked her pearly skin
And faintly, sweetly netted in
The heaving billows of her breast
As foamy waves may shadow through
The blue beneath a snowy crest;
And O! The flood of golden hair
That flowed across her tapering arm
And round her neck—as she did wear
"Some aureate amulet, some charm,
Perhaps against the Evil Eye,"
I thought, and with a hint of shame
That faded down into a sigh.
But this is not potential harm!
She cannot know that thus I came
And in enchanted wonder gazed
Upon each white and perfect limb!
And when the sunlight's crescent rim,
Along the cabin window blazed
And did her snowy drapery tip
With flame, from throat to sloping hip,
And make translucent every thread
From marble feet to golden head,
Each rounded curve, each sloping line
Flushed as if it were flushed with wine,
And through her white robes sunlit-mist
Shone luminous and half concealed

In warm rays that caressed and kissed
The figure which they so revealed,
In adoration passionless,
And due her glorious loveliness.
Then this revealing line of light
Sank down the boat's protecting wall
As if the day-god, unaware
With casual look, saw sleeping there
Some angel of the upper air,
Transfixed in charmed astonishment,
Awhile his widening glances bent,
Then let, abashed, his lashes fall.

And I! Ah me! I looked around
As he who in some tale of old,
Traversing some enchanted ground
Finds, suddenly, a hoard of gold;
Eager to learn if any there
May claim the trove or seek a share.

Perhaps it was my burning glance;
Perhaps the beating of my heart;
Perhaps my quickened breathing did
Arouse her from this sweetest trance.
A quiver of her veinéd lid
Scarce did sufficient warning make
Of that too quick, convulsive start
That turned her toward me, half-awake.
I know I flushed with dread the while
Her eyes, unrecognizing, took
A coldly strange, inquiring look,
And her red lips did downward droop
Until they formed a coral loop

About a central gleam of pearl.
And now they swiftly, sweetly curl
Into a brightening, gladdening smile,
Her hands fly up like glistening wings,
About mine flutter, more than clasp;
I hardly feel them, till she flings
My hands away; withdrawn aloof
Her fingers seek the coverlet;
Her eyes half-frightened, smiling, yet
Not in sheer anger; but reproof
Into their corners whitely fly,
And her negating head vibrates
A warning trill that agitates
And shakes the light suspended boat.
Some vain apology I try
That dies within my husky throat,
And so, abashed, I steal away.
She, in a moment more, is dressed,
Appears unconscious, self-possessed,
And so remains throughout the day.

And at the welcome morning meal
Which she so quickly cooked and set,
I said: "Will not my patient feel
That we, or rather, I, have let
The keener appetite I brought
To this your table, set at naught
The better breeding of the West
That still should wait for host or guest?"

"Which question is in place of one
To ask me whither he has gone,"
She answered in her gayest mood;

"But may be I am only rude
Instead of witty. Many make
This somewhat natural mistake.
I told you something of his way,
On—was it only yesterday?—
Just think! It really appears
To me a whole decade of years!"

She said this in a musing tone,
As if she self-communed alone;
Continuing, with a thoughtful air:
"It grows upon me like a care;
While he does angrily resent
What he terms 'the espionage';
A sort of warfare I must wage,—
With less I could not be content,—
But in these happy days of late
I am content, nay pleased, to wait.
A moment here; a moment gone,
I never know if he is near
Until his stealthy foot upon
The sounding doorstep I can hear.
Sometimes, indeed, I greatly fear—"
She paused, arose, went to the door
And looked about a moment more
Then saw, and said: "The truant comes!"
And, tripping back she gaily hums
Some lightsome, little snatch of song;
And, presently, there stalks along
The figure of this man, erect
And cautious, swift and circumspect,
Nay, even watchful—fiercely so;

Thus did my quick impressions grow;
Thus, even then, I felt they took
Their color from the stronger tint,
The thing that gave continual hint
Of what was largest in his look,
And long before he reached the log
That formed the door's unfinished sill,
Strive as I might against it, still,
I thought of some fierce, bristling dog
That did about the cabin prowl
With glaring eyes and threatening growl.
Then I remarked, while yet he paused
Some dozen yards, or more, away.
"What of Diana's hounds that caused
Her great annoyance yesterday?
Think you they follow still, the chase?
Are they as we are, waterbound?
And in some covert hiding place
On our vine-tangled Indian Mound?
Or have they taken better thought?"
But here, her warning look I caught,
And saw the swift vibrating shake
That thrilled her glittering, golden head
When in her rosy, sun-lit bed
An hour ago she sprang awake;
And, too, the meaning sidelong glance
That archly turned her laughing eyes
Half warningly against surprise,
As knowing possible mischance,
And half amusedly to show
What I, a stranger, might not know;—
Sweet confidences so extend

Protection to some valued friend,
For anxious, keen solicitude
Is in the heart of such a mood.

She must have seen this thought that went
Along the fine wires of my brain;
Thus may a silent thought's intent
Be, after all, as audient
As many of the things of speech,
And, by some secret power, plain
To some percipient minds that reach
Soft hands of kindred natures out
To clasp, unerringly about,
With fixed attention, all their own,
The soul's resounding telephone.

I saw her force that pretty frown
I noted on her brow before,
That, as a light cloud settled down
Before the moon that round it bore
The light of pleasing thought that lies
Within the shadows of the eyes.
And then she spake: "You do forget
Some small restraints that I imposed,
When I impulsively disclosed
My secret, thus I rashly set,
Or threw into your hands the waif
I could not carry safe, and flee
And deeming you would keep it safe
If 't were against the king — for *me;*
Alas! Impressions quickly made
Must ever be as quick to fade."

She spoke, with her soft, mocking smile,
Down-hanging head and upturned lash
That showed her eyes' mischievous flash
On me, and then about the room;
I, blushing like a boy the while,
Did murmur indistinctly low
"Some bright impressions, that I know
Shall fade but in the crack of doom,
Which three short days have deeply pressed
On every fiber of my breast."

Again that arch disparagement
That, in some strangely cogent way,
She could so palpably convey
By that vibration of her head,
That to my understanding went
As straight as if she then did say,
In words, what presently she did,
With warning finger-shake that chid
As gently as a mother might.

"A poet is a very wight;
A sort of gentle lunatic;
But all impetuous and quick
To fall, too hastily, in love,
And nothing short of heavenly power,
Or something from the world above
Could keep him rational one hour,
Did not his Luna grant the boon
To change his love with changing moon.
This alternating wax and wane
Takes off his heart so much of strain,

Yet leaves him, after all, less cold
Than men of ordinary mould."
You see that I your secret know.

"I saw some graceful, heartful verse —
I found it in a scrap-book there —
I 'll read it; or, perhaps, rehearse,
When I have time enough to spare;
Or I can sing it to an air —
A soft, sad bit of twilight tune,"
"And dedicated to the moon?"
I said, concealing that sweet thrill
Of keenest pleasure, that must still
Come in its most enchanting ways
From those we love or but admire.
The human heart can never tire
Of praise, though wrought in halting phrase;
Earth's greatest heroes ever were
Bound to some cunning flatterer,
And well may lesser men be led
By this silk tangle of the head;
Or, after all, we may misjudge
The hero and his worshippers;
There may be in us some small grudge,
Which malice cunningly confers —
A power of smallness on our sight
Which sees by greenly jealous light.

There is, within us, such a sense,
A craving, an instinctive need,
A hunger that will even feed
Upon a thin and coarse pretense
Of praise, for quality or deed,

Or what of high exalted powers
We hope, suspect, or know for ours ;
And hero-worship well may be
That sign of occult sympathy
That is and only can be wrought
In brotherhood of taste and thought.

I take it that congenialness
Is more than that mere word implies ;
It flows from praise that we address
To something which within us stands
With eloquent uplifted hands
In gladiatorial, mute appeal
To some that laugh, to some that feel ;
And while the world sits round us, dumb,
With scornful, downward-pointing thumb,
He is a monarch, in our eyes,
A god from empyrean skies
Who speaks some warm, approving word.
O ! vastly deeper, then, is stirred
This stronger feeling of the mind
By woman's words, of sweet applause
That do so surely seek and find
Some dear, self-worshipped excellence,
And to some towering eminence,
Some dizzy, beatific height
Of never-ending self-delight
So potently uplifts or draws.
Some thoughts like these I sought to reach
And build them into phrase of speech ;
But now my host came slowly in,
At foot of table shortly sat,
Threw, carelessly, aside his hat,

And slowly said: "Sometime I've been
In exploration of the Beach.
This is a day for sail and air!
We'll pack, at once, our little store
And all this inland sea explore."

He did not look at either, then.
I saw a flush suffuse her cheek.
She spoke to him with wordless lips
And furtive, crooking finger-tips.
He answered with a darker look,
And then the ebbing tide forsook
The dimpled shallows of her face.
She stood there for a little space
With such a look of white distress
As made its visible impress
Upon my tell-tale countenance,
And then she threw another glance
Of reassurance, bright and brief,
That wrought its work of kind relief.

And still, I felt a loneliness,
A dim and dark fore-shadowing,
That did most heavily oppress,
When from its airy, vibrant swing,
The boat, the bed, the hang-bird's nest
Was lowered quickly to the ground,
And there did but a moment rest,
Till freighted with their slender store,
Packed in a long and narrow chest—
The infant in a blanket wound;
So, holding at the sides, we bore
It out, and then the empty room

Took on a still, funereal gloom.
Our voices had the hushing sound
Of those who walk beside a pall;

But where the poplars broad and tall
Marked off the flooded river's edge,
We pushed the boat among the sedge,
And then they drew some steps aside
And held some low and earnest talk.
I think, against my wish I tried
To catch some phrases that did balk
All efforts of my straining ears.
At length he said: "It now appears
You two had better take the boat,
While I, afoot along the bluff,
Will watch where'er you sail or float;
These giant weeds are tall enough
To make a covert dense and green
Where mastodon could scarce be seen."

As one who with himself debates
Some vexing problem of the mind
Unconsciously articulates
The thought, that else, might never find
To other eyes and ears its way,
And, too, as if he slowly heard
Some echo of incautious word
His automatic lips did say.
And so, becoming quite aware
Of all their import, from my stare,
Threw on me a derisive look
Tinged with contemptuous distrust
That stung me like a needle thrust.

I saw as from some delphic nook
This man with pistols in his belt,
And strong and greedy hands that felt
His new, repeating rifle's lock,
The trigger and the carved stock;
His eyes — the soldier orbs of gray
That roved about in brake and fen,
A hunter of — aha! Of men!
Of men? — the skulking men who went
With stealthy feet and shoulders bent,—
The hounds that bayed not on her track,
Adown the river, aye, and back!
Did I not say they sought not her,
The Pallid Golden Wanderer?

But now I heard her sweeter call
That drew me to the floating yawl.
She gaily pulled a careless oar
Along the weed embowered shore.
I took my seat behind and near,
So I could look into her eyes
And watch each shadow of surprise,
And where upon my waiting ear
Her lightest word, her lowest tone
Could be distinctly heard alone.

And then I thought of fitting phrase
That delicately might convey
A thought — the growth of these three days;—
This dark suspicion that o'er lay
My vivid impress of these two,
That strong and stronger on me grew,—
But whether she my purpose guessed,

Or whether this were uppermost,
I know not,—I have so confessed,
And with, perhaps, a hidden boast;—
But her next sweet word's rhythmic play
Set all my thoughts another way.

"And you a poet! I had dreamed,"
So she began; "A thousand times
Of those strange, moody men of rhymes,
And I so foolishly had deemed
That pretty phrases drop along
The common highways of their talk
As nuts along a wooded walk,
And all their words weave into song."

She laughing turned her glances 'round
To where some walnut branches brown
With yellow leaves bestrewed the ground,
Where oft the loaded shells came down,
With sound that broke upon the breeze—
The minute-guns of nutted trees.

I watched her till the sail was trimmed,
And when we left the weedy shore
And all the yellow waters skimmed
An ever varying course we bore;
Now in the center of the seas
Among long rafts of broken drift—
All things that such a stream can lift:
Up-rooted green and leafy trees
That long a slender tenure held
Beside some steep and wearing bank;
But which this final flood had felled—
And while they shivering shook and sank,

With leaves like hands stretched to the sky,
Went slowly floating, helpless, by;
We spoke of the decrees of Fate,
And how the mighty things of life
Have but their day to watch and wait;
How little of avail is strife,
How vainly may a life be hurled
Against the currents of the world!

And some surprising things she said,
That made me mentally withdraw
As if I walked with lighter tread,
To watch her with a secret awe,
Nor comprehending all I saw.
Thus, as we passed a little nook,
A tiny deep and narrow bay
Made by a widened mouth of brook
O'erhung by willow, weed and vine,
And lit with streaks of yellow shine,
And where some bits of driftwood lay,
She said, and pointing with a smile:

"There is my story told in brief;
From yon relentless current swift
Yon logs have found a short relief,
And here they rest a little while,
Escaping from the crushing drift
That ever rushes, crowds and strives
As does the mass of human lives.
Here in sweet peacefulness they stay
An hour — Ah! well, mayhap, a day,
And then some envious undertow
With fated and resistless flow

Shall pull or push them out again.
They plead and strive to still remain,
But plead and pray and strive in vain;
Yon current draws them rushing on
To some dark destiny unknown;
And such a fate I feel my own.
A week and I, too, will be gone;
And, see, how well the figure holds!
This resting drift here touches hands
With all fair forms of pleasing moulds,—
The ferns, the autumn leaves, the strands
Of green and purple beaded vines;—
Each graceful, clinging thing that twines
And bends above the water's brink
Make this the dearest place to drink
The sweets of perfect peace and rest."

A moment she had such an air
Of deep abstraction and of care;
Her head turned downward and sidewise,
Her lids half-drooped adown her eyes,
Her cheek upon her shoulder stooped,
Her mouth again so coral-looped
As I had seen it in the light
Of that remembered rising sun,
Whose eye with me had looked upon
That vision of the flitted night.
She was a picture, sad and fair,
Of Retrospection, drooping there
In that sweet, pensive, piteous pose;
Her golden hair about her ears
Gave out to me a hint of tears
Like rain upon a snow-white rose.

Perhaps a minute thus she bent
Beneath some boding after-thought,
Then looking quickly up she caught
My own half-pitying glance, intent.

Of this dear day I think these all
The incidents that I recall,
In fair relief and well defined.
There are some dimly-faint outlined,
As if the pictures once were drawn
Upon some leaflet ages gone,
Or shown on some coarse page behind
The blotting-paper of the mind.

All day we sailed about and read,
Or sang or talked in murmurs low;
The blue sky bending overhead,
The widened water's voiceful flow;
The gorgeous autumn on the trees;
The fitful breathings of the breeze;
The limbs of drift that higher hung
By older, mightier floods upswung,
And left to dangle as in pain,
Like pirates hanged in gibbet chain;
The passing fleets of drifting raft,
The river's black primeval craft,
Whose cruise is like the life of man,
Some lasting but a little span,
To land upon some tangled shore;
Some slipping, strangely, through and o'er
Unheard-of perils, safe to glide
Far out on some slow ocean tide,
And there forever to abide;

"AND EACH TALL, LEANING SYCAMORE"

We furled our sail when at the noon
Our fragile boat was safely laid
Beneath a yellow wheel of shade,
By clump of island maples made.
The dinner seemed a sweeter boon
Dispensed by her fair, heartful hand.
I now could fairly understand
How touch of one we love makes sweet
The coarse and common food we eat.

And when the sun had nearly sunk
Behind his prairie veil of red,
And each tall, leaning sycamore
Looked like some penitential monk
That in a dark seclusion wore
His cowl of leaves upon his head;
And low along the darkening sky
We saw the blue-crane homeward fly;
And here a splash of water struck
By fearlessly-alighting duck;
And from the shore the katydid
In leafy covert safely hid;
The dolorous call of distant owl,
The whirring wings of water fowl;
And long and loud above them all
The weird and melancholy call
Of distant engine whistle blown,
In lonesome cadence, up and down
The waterways about the town,
Gave that inseparable tone
Of sadly solemn thoughtfulness
That does the closing day oppress.

In silence, then, about we turned
Toward where a slender fagot burned.
"See there!" she said, "our signal light
Within the forest's shadowy vault.
Diana's hounds must be at fault
And bay upon a wintry track,
And we may safely venture back;
A sheltering roof, the fire alight,
A supper fresh and crisp and warm,
With guaranty from sudden harm,
These are the meanings of yon blaze."

CANTO IV.

There's something in the stroke of "one"
That holds, for me, appalling sounds.
The "twelve" that tells when day is done
And some new morning has begun,
Though legend-set upon the bounds
Of poetry's most ghostly grounds,
Has nought to me of wild and weird
That makes the first hour ever feared.
No tolling bell can bring such shock
As that short stroke of any clock
That falls beyond the middle night
In one sharp sound of startling fright,
As if Time's first-born briefly tried
Life with one gasping cry, and died.

And it may be my fateful star
Did measure me life's little dower
And from my birth did set the bar

At this all empty, echoing hour.
It is the outcast son of morn
Who, through the ages that have gone
And those to come, was doomed and born
To walk unmated and alone.

And like this lonely hour, are such
As bend a shrinking head, and bow
Beneath the Cain-like finger touch
Of genius on a broader brow.
In elder times these were called "mad"
And held the distant, curious gaze
Of men throughout their briefer days.
And in our times, O! not less sad
And solitary is the road
That leads them on to no abode.
They have no fellowship with man,
They walk beneath a social ban,
And doomed to be misunderstood,
Condemned as distant, cold and rude.

They shrink into a solitude
Of townless prairie; tangled wood
Or damless stream; or sailless lake;
And some a drearier habit make
In loftier garrets of the town,
From whence but hunger drives them down,
And with that hunger satisfied
They fly to their high perch and hide;
And love, that makes the lighter laugh
And keeps for them no doubts nor fears,
Holds bitter-sweet for these to quaff
And oft refills the cup with tears,

Still presses to the tender lip,
That must forever sip and sip.
This thought awoke me as I lay
Upon my pallet in the room,
And startled heard, long miles away,
The town-clock's sudden, single boom,
That swept along the wind and fell
Upon me as a funeral knell.
And then there burst an awful flash,
A horrible and blinding glare,
A deafening roar, a shattering crash
That seemed to come from everywhere;
Then came a shrill and piercing cry
Of more than mortal agony.
Some dreadful thing had happened there!
My heart stood in a still suspense,
And yet I knew with every sense
The instant deepening of the gloom
That fell upon the silent room.
A stifling vapor in the air
That weighed me down upon the ground.
And, too, I heard the clattering sound
Of objects falling, raining where
A something fell beside my boot.
I touched it with exploring foot
And found a short, thin, oaken board
That did a startling story tell.
The riven shingle must have soared
High in the air before it fell,
And something must have forced its flight
Up to'rd the center of the night;
And soon I recognized the smell,

That stifling smell of dynamite!
This thought that in the darkness crept,
At once into the daylight leapt.
That awful flash, that roar was made
By murderous hurtling hand-grenade!
"I hear no voice! Does she survive?
Or am I, only, left alive?
And who the coward murderer?
Ha! those who in the dogging boat
Did sneak and slink and follow her!
Could our fair Wabash safely float
Such scum of vile and cruel drift?
It should have sent destruction swift —
The furies of the wind and tide!"
But hark! a loud and hoarse demand
That was so fiercely voiced outside,
To "strike a light; unbar the door!"
I knew where loaded guns did stand
Against a wall; but just before
I reached the spot, a whisper fierce
That seemed the pitchy night to pierce,
Though inarticulate, yet clear,
As if it hissed into my ear —
"Lie down! lie down! Be still! be still!"
I both obeyed against my will.
Outside the hut I heard the tramp
Of shuffling feet upon the damp
And sodden leaves that lay around;
I heard the low and muttered sound
Of eager voices, while a beam
Of light through crevices did gleam
And slowly glide along a wall,

Upon a little heap to fall
An instant, and then disappear.
I felt the sickening heat of fear
And rage; was that the mangled form
Of her who brought me through the storm,—
Of her who in a little day
Had so upon my nature wrought,
As bound and held my every thought
With passion's more than regal sway?

What though she were a wedded wife
Beloved or loving, thus she came
Upon the brown coals of my life,
And with a honied breath that blew
The kindling spark of passion through,
Until it burst, a whitening flame,
And blazed in every crinkling vein,
In every fibril of my frame;
And those cool arches of the brain
That heretofore were wont to hold
The meats of reason, frozen, cold
In perfect preservation, sweet,
Now glittered in the furnace heat—
The heat of passion, fierce and strong,
That parched and burned its way along
The currents of my blood, that seethed
And in a thickening vapor wreathed
About the lofty heights of mind,
Where dark, obscuring clouds collect
Round Duty, Honor, Self-Respect,
And hide them till we may not find
These landmarks of life's higher way,
But stumbling wander far astray.

And now a swift and battering blow
Strikes down, unhinged, the cabin door.
A glare of lights from lanterns glow
An instant on the wall and floor,
And then a splitting, shattering roar,
Far sharper, shriller than before,
Of shotted guns, as if a rank —
A veteran rank — of riflemen
Had fired, to load and fire again;
The noise then quickly stilled or sank.
The lights were gone; yet blazing spite
Of flashing gun renewed to sight
Each object in a fleeting glow.
I saw, or deemed that I did see,
A pallid face that I should know,
No matter where we two might be.
Her hand, her slender, shapely hand,
Did grasp a blazing weapon tight;
She seemed, half crouchingly, to stand
An instant in that central light,
And then the curtain of the night
Did her envelop all about,
To leave an agonizing doubt
If I had dreamed, or seen aright.

And such a silence settled down!
The wind sprang up towards the town
As if it flew for human aid;
The trees shrank back as if afraid,
And filled the night with hollow moans
Of weird and ghostly woodland tones,
And shook the great heart of the wood
With sounding cries for human blood.

A chill creeps down upon my heart,
The frigid foolishness of fear;
I start, and turn again and start;
Irresolution holds me here.
My soul is guiltless; but so near
Am I to damning signs of guilt—
Of human blood that here is spilt—
If men shall come, who will believe
The too strange story I must tell
Of all this dreadful night befell?

Men have been victims of such chance;
The stern grip of the cruel law
Does all inexorably draw
The tightening chain of circumstance
Round him whom it most quickly finds
Alone, unfriended, and it binds
Him easily, and leads away
To quench the mob's keen thirst to slay.

This whirlpool of recurrent thought
Thus went and came again and brought
The darker terrors it had caught
From wavering shadows of the trees
And quavering voices of the breeze.

I thought I heard my whispered name.
Or was it my wild fancy too?
Again! in louder whisper came
Through barring darkness, where it drew
A moment upward from the ground.
My heart gave one glad, fluttering bound.
"Where are you?" "Here!" I reached to grasp
Her head one moment in my clasp.

A moment it did lie and rest
Upon my hotly beating breast,
A fleeting moment; and she said:
"I feared, I dreaded you were dead,
But O! how can I speak of fears?
My heart, my soul, do seething, beat,
Merged in a sea of unshed tears
For my sweet babe here at our feet,
All rent and bleeding. Had he died
That evening that you saw him first,
I would not have been satisfied;
Nor yet would my heart strain and burst
With this, my great, my only grief;
You! you! did bring him quick relief!
You did with death so nobly strive!
O! if he still should be alive!
Quick! get a light! Your fingers, there!
You feel the wet mass of his hair?
What is it? Here, his wrist and hand!
There was a lantern on my stand!"

I heard her fumbling, and the scratch
And sputter of a lighting match,
A flare, and then the ruined room
Burst as a rent bud into bloom.
I sank beside a broken chair,
And gazed around with clouded stare.
What was it? Did not some one ask
Me to perform some hated task?
Ah, here! perhaps a little arm
Has in the darkness come to harm;
These drops among his curly hair
Seem thick and gummy, dark; ha! red!

Blood! But whose? Lift up the damp,
Limp body to'rds the shining lamp!
Ah! see his small hands fall away;
This is but a sweet bit of clay!
My touch about his head I pass
To find it but a shattered mass.
'T was then that murderous hand-grenade
That sought this tender infant out!

I pause again and look about.
See! what a wreck the missile made!
Great logs are splintered; and the roof
Is rent asunder — side from side,
And shows the dim sky, dark and wide.
I shrink at this appalling proof,
That does not leave me room to guess
Of that grim ball's destructiveness.

And, still, I think strong men should be
The mark of such blind enemy,
Instead of this fair, tender child.
"O! if there were intelligence
That even notes the sparrow's fall,
This infant still had waked and smiled!"

I cry out, thus accusing God,
Then add, at Grief's incisive prod —
Perchance, somewhat in self-defense —
"If one were doomed to journey hence,
I might have gone the best of all;
There grows upon my half-spent life
The ivy-ruin of a love
Unblest of aught below, above.
Upon the blossoms of our lives

It grew in one dark night of strife;
Ill-starred and ominous it thrives,
And still forever grows and spreads
About our bent and doomed heads;
Such fate would not have been unkind!
Could jagged bits of iron find
Their bloody way into my breast—
I should be then, at least, at rest."

But this small forehead should have grown
In joyousness to man's expanse;
The ways of peace these feet had known,
These eyes had felt love's tender glance,
This little heart, now cold and still,
Had felt the keenly rapturous thrill
Of triumph, and the glow of fame
That blazes in a mighty name;
Or it might be his darker fate
Had led him up the steeps of thorn.
Unto what fortune we are born
We know not; but must work and wait.
Those loved of gods must perish young,
Some ancient poet sadly sung;
But I would have all children live
And in life's struggles take their share
Until the joys that life can give
Have come and gone, and left it bare;
Nor fall while loving, sheltering arms
Of parents clasp them all about
Against the greedy, growing harms
That constantly do seek us out,
And find us, aye, as constantly
To pierce and rend us ere we die.

"This is no time to loiter here!"
A deep and hollow voice did say;
"Some hours, perhaps, the way is clear,
But we must meet the coming day
Long miles from here; if, still, we may.
You, sir, are most unfortunate,
But you must blame a wayward fate.
I think that you should longer stay
And meet your friends with open hands."

"My friends! No pack of wolves, nor bands
Of red marauders of the plains
Have on their souls such damning stains,
Nor more deserve the fires of hell,
Than they who threw that fatal shell!"
"Of your past life I, knowing naught,
May guess the secrets of this night;
But still you were attacked, and fought
As I, or any man would fight,
Not merely in defense of life,
But for your dead child and — your wife;
But let these questions all go by,
I grant that you must quickly fly."
He muttered: "Or remain to die!"
"I, too, think I should here remain.
I have no power to detain
You here, if e'en I had the will."
He bowed with such sarcastic skill,
And turned his gleaming eyes and head
Upon a group of ghastly dead,
That I could dimly see before
The lantern-lighted cabin door,
And there his coldly sneering glance,

With sinister significance,
On them and then upon me lay
A moment, and then turned away.
I reddened, stammered and did halt
As one whose speech is all at fault.

"What shall we do," I said, "with him?"
His glance a moment seemed to dim,
As if he saw not what was there,
But peered into the viewless air.
From my own heart I know full well
His gaze on nothing present fell.
Months afterward I overtook
The very center of his look,
And saw the vision he had seen:
A gentle sloping hill of green,
A little cottage, new and white,
That caught a wisp of summer light
Beneath a nestled clump of trees,
Whose leaves were rustled by a breeze
That blew across the Tennessee
In tumult of ecstatic glee.
But O! there is a throb of pain
With my heart's sadly sinking beat;
The picture in my striving brain
Compared with his is incomplete.
I try to see her pensive, still,
And lying on an odorous bed
Of clover blossoms burning red,
Half listening to the mellow hum
Of bees among the curving elms;
Half waiting for her king to come
Out of her dream-land's rosy realms.

And all the joy I ever felt
I would so lightly give away
Could I approvedly have knelt
Beside her on such summer day.

He, in that momentary trance
Of mem'ry, saw her not alone;
He heard an infant's cooing tone.
In that brief retrospective glance
He saw again the happy days
Ere flaming blade of cherubim
In wrath and vengeance pointed him,
With her, beyond the opal gate,
Into the dark and thorny ways
That lead men onward to their fate.

I stood without, upon the ground,
And groping in the darkness found
An ax, with which I shaped a spade
Of board — a poor, rude implement.
My thought was, by it, backward bent
To the Mound Builders, first, who made
With such rude tools their earlier graves,
Like this, above the wash of waves.
It seemed long hours that I threw
The loam and yellow sand about;
The blast came keen and chilly out,
Till in my buttoned coat I drew
And hugged myself and shivered still,
Till to the marrow crept the chill.
As still the rude vault deeper grew,
My limbs seemed weighted as with lead,
There came a throbbing in my head,

A heaviness upon my eyes,
Strange figures, too, did seem to rise
And push about in awesome guise.
But when on these I fixed my look
They vanished quite away, or took
The forms of two, who mourning, shed
No tears above their cherished dead.

The time, interminably slow,
Did in an endless cycle go.
Those bloody dead that lay before,
And 'round about the cabin door!
Upon their faces, or their backs,
Dropped like the stalled ox in his tracks!
It seemed to me, each dead face wore
A crimson mask of clotted gore!
"Must I, for them, dig ditches deep?
There is no hurry — let them sleep
And lie untouched a day, a week,
Until their friends have time to seek
And coffin them as Christian souls;
We only bury dogs in holes!
But this slight child must bide its fate!"

Our boat again! Do we sail on?
Where have our stealthy followers gone?
Lie down? Why, since I cannot stand,
I may as well. Give me your hand.

"I have such wondrous lack of strength,
Here I may lie at utmost length.
Your hand it is so moist and cool,
Like water dripping in a pool!

L. of C.

"But what is this I think I see?
Is it some phase of this long dream?
Our Indian cabin, can it be,
Beside Wabash's rippled stream?

"You lift and lay me on the floor;
Your brown, oft-doubled shawl my bed!
Or can it be that I am dead?
May not this weird and spectral flight
Prove, after all, the Greek was right,
And ye are come to ferry o'er
The dead to dim Plutonian shore?

"'Stay! stay with me! What! has she gone?'
I call in vain to empty walls;
I feel, and dread to feel alone;
No human sound upon me falls."

But through my long and burning sleep,
From dreams, I 'wakened many times;
I tried, and vainly tried, to keep
The phrasing of some pleasing rhymes
That sang unto me, now and then;
I thought that they would make my fame;
I longed to seize and read them when
The critic daylight's searching flame
Should throw them into bold relief,
Strong, beautiful beyond belief.

And so I conned them o'er and o'er,
But then would come the deadened roar
Of dropping volleys, harsh and rude,
Till each bright couplet did elude
The cunning etching of the mind
And left no line nor shade behind.

And yet it seems a strange, sad song
That in these night hours came to me;
Perhaps its spirit does belong
To that dream-song that seemed to be
A witching and a fleeting spell;
Bright, and ephemeral as well.

"Smile at them of old no more
Who, the ancient legends said,
For their household treasures, wore
Mummied bodies of their dead.

"After all, were they not wise
Who 'mid change, destruction rife,
Kept their loved dead in their eyes
And the semblances of life.

"Self-deceiving worst deceives;
Reason ever more contends
With what mortal love believes
Life grows endless, when it ends.

"Who some mighty work hath wrought
In the furnace of the brain,
Who hath fixed some human thought
He may, haply, live again.

"Who hath stamped a single page
With the imprint of his truth,
Shall enjoy, in every age,
Endless heritage of youth.

"Thou art but a type of men;
All thy hopes and all thy fears
Moved some human bosom when
Earth had but thy scores of years.

"Thoughts that thou dost idly deem
All unnoted, save by thee,
Are the secrets and the dream
Of the ages yet to be.

"Look into thy inmost breast —
Paint not only hills that shine —
In its blackest hollows rest
Impulses that yet are thine.

"Thine! and yet not thine alone,
Each dark impulse is a part
Of the structure time has grown
Slow into the human heart.

"If thou voice another's thought,
If thou draw unreal men,
Thou shalt in thy net be caught,
Slain forever by thy pen.

"These my waking lines are weak,
And above them grandly rise
Those dream-words I cannot speak —
Echoes lost from Paradise."

CANTO V.

I knew not if a day or year
Had passed while thus I slumbered on —
A sleep that had its haunting fear,
Its pressing need that I be gone;
Filled with its hindering circumstance,
What way I took it mattered not;
It hindered every new advance
And bound me, helpless, to the spot.

Sometimes I walked a lofty height
That narrowed to a slender wall,
Where my enforced, precarious flight,
Held momentary dread of fall;
While deep and dangerous below,
Some sullen stream, on either side,
Menanced me with its turbid flow–
Relentless, cruel, cold and wide.

Sometime I labored at an oar
Against a rapid yellow stream
That ever, as I rowed, still wore
A dread, mysterious, lurid gleam,
Till, through instinctive fear, I knew
Some baleful planet, some red moon,
In swift and narrowing orbit flew
A doomful flight, that, all too soon,
Its mass of molten wrath had hurled
Upon a crisp, consuming world.

And in my frantic haste I strove
And struggled with the ashen blade,
Which, in the bubbling torrent drove,
Against the row-lock sprang and made
A regular, recurrent sound
That loud, and louder rang around,
Till other sounds it did efface
And filled all resonant, echoing space
With thunder of its steady blows,
Until awakened wide, I rose
On weary arm enough to see
A long deserted cabin door,
Half closed by some gigantic tree
Some ancient, drifted sycamore.

Beyond, the Wabash red and wide,
With sun-blaze on its gleaming tide,
A broad and level, western sun,
That told me how some day was done.

Still in my ear the sounding shock
Of oar that sprang against its lock,
Persistent, held my wakened brain;
I feebly raised me from my bed—
The poplar puncheon where I 'd lain,
A brown and soft, oft-doubled shawl—
I press my hands upon my head,
A moment like an infant crawl,
Then totter with uncertain tread,
Unto the opening in the wall.
A shawl? *Her* shawl? And then the burst
Of recollection does its worst.
I gasp, and grasp the window-sill;
My heart, a moment, sits so still,
Then sinks so wearily that, yet
The reminiscence of regret
Comes faintly o'er me as I write,
Long years beyond that autumn night.

The sound of rowing nearer grows,
And so, I stand upon my toes;
My fingers gripe the window-ledge;
I lean my head upon its edge,
And see a yawl, a group of men
That chatter noisily and hold
Each on his arm a rifle cold,
And full of cruel purpose when
The game shall leave his sheltering fen.

Two oarsmen stoutly tug and pull,
And two sit watchful at the stern,
And oft their glances backward turn,
And 'round their hands they coil and wind
Some tautened lines that hold a hull
Of oarless boat, close up behind.

A boat that glides without an oar!
Have I not seen that craft before?
Have I not seen it fly away
Like wild-duck through a bank of spray?
So lightly it was wont to swim,
It seemed the river's breast to skim;
Why, now, so deeply doth it sink,
As if it learned to crouch and slink?

Alas! what sad and heavy freight
Makes such deep ballast of its weight?
What strange and precious merchandise
That cannot brook a glance of eyes,
But holds itself concealed within
The folds of some grim tarpaulin?
That gives a dark suggestiveness
In rounded curve and rigid fold,
That does not leave me room to guess
The secret it pretends to hold,
With but a mockery of strength.

A heap! and of the human length,
With secret touch of mortal mould,
Such as the Mandan scaffolds keep
'Neath gray north-clouds that silent sweep
O'er those lone prairies, bleak and cold.

Could yon frail craft so sink with her,
Or slowly bear so light a load?
Comes thus the pallid wanderer
Along the smooth and slippery road?

And must men lie like corded wood,
Thrown in with rude and careless toss,
By hands that feel not human loss,
But brutal calculation make
How each surviving partner's share
Should, by the law of tontine, take
Such added value, they could bear
Bereavement with much fortitude,
And cheerfulness of retrospect,
To lend a glow to solitude?

"A dozen comrades dead, elect
Life's graver perils to elude!
Must we break silence but to sigh
Because men go their ways and die?
'T were best philosophy instead
That we, at once, accounting have
And canvass thoroughly the dead
Ere they are coffined for the grave!"

Words such as these I heard them say,
While their dark boat, with resting keel,
Upon a widening sand-bar lay,
And not a dozen yards away
They ate their hasty evening meal.

I saw them o'er their victuals bowed,
And heard colliding voices loud,
That in a grim elegiac

The dead men's qualities did track,
With more of true post-obit fame
Than ever from a pulpit came ;
But this because the truth was bad —
Good reason why it should be free ; —
The mantle of sweet charity
A mystic garment was to them ;
'T were some mischance if any had
So much as touched its lower hem.

Not all they said can I repeat.
There was one very brutal phrase,
Somewhat about "the dearest meat
They ever bought, in all their days ;"
And this was bandied forth and back
With varying turn of ribald jest.
My ear was strained unto its best,
To follow every worded track
That led, or even seemed to lead,
Upon the course that I would speed.

"The dearest meat!" What flesh could be
One-thousandth part so dear and fair
As those round arms I once did see
Half hidden in the yellow hair,
That threw its golden netted mesh
Adown her bosom's gentle curve
And lay in shining threads across,
Illumining the pallid flesh
With warmer tints, as if to serve
To give some life, or hide its loss
In veilings of its yellow floss?

This thought did smite and rend my breast.
She! she! the mark of jibe and jest!
She lying so, within her boat,
Within her fairy hang-bird's nest;
Around her, brutal eyes that gloat,
And hands with murder fresh imbued;
A brood, a slimy serpent brood,
That crawled and crept to where it hung
And slew the mother and her young,
Coiled in the nest and hissed and swung.

Again and yet again there ran
A molten bolt of rage that flew
The center of my being through,
A hissing blade of hate that came
Like some consuming edge of flame,
And cut and blazed an instant plan
Of vengeance swift, remorseless dire.
"Let me each feature of each face
Draw on my brain in lines of fire!
With all the skill that hate can trace;
Whatever cunning I possess,
Whatever strength, whatever skill
I'll hold and hoard, to grow no less
While there is one of these to kill!
And I will seek them day by day
With speeches soft and velvet tread;
A powder has its power to slay,
And who shall say when one is dead,
The parching thirst, the seething pain
That burned and wrenched his tortured brain,
Less hard to bear than if he sped
With leaden bullet through his head?"

What need to scan them? I would know
Their vaguest shadows dimly thrown
Upon a level waste of snow
By rays some morning moon would own
Against the swiftly growing claim
Of coming daylight's kindling flame.

Or in the hurry of a crowd,
And roar of voices strange and loud,
If one of these, the briefest word
Should lowest whisper, 'twould be heard.
Heard! aye, to hold my inner ear
Secure against all other sounds,
And growing, resonant and clear,
As if they leapt with growing bounds,
And as the cry of running hounds
That yelp upon a freshening trail,
And so the air and ear assail
Until the flagging game in sight
Intensifies pursuit and flight,
So I, with every gasp of breath,
Shall follow these up to the death.

Slow up the stream their way they wend
Till the brown shadow of the night
And the swift river's distant bend
Have crawled between me and the sight
That glazed my wildly burning eye.
My hot breath blew into a sigh,
And e'en my deepest muttered tones
Did change from curses into groans;
So quick doth anger fade away
Before Love's higher, mightier sway.

Ah! why, while yet my glances gloat
Upon yon almost vanished boat,
And where the ripples dance and burn
Beneath a crimson sunset cloud
Above the redder maples bowed,
Why is my head compelled to turn
Against volition, and untaught
By any guidance of a thought?

You, too, have known it — on the street
When, by the merest hap of chance,
Some hurried, unconcerted glance
Has brought your startled eyes to meet
The look you would most gladly greet.

And so I turned unthinking round;
There was a startled, joyful cry
And two that o'er the ground did fly.
'Twas then she told me of the fight
That interrupted our swift flight
When they, a moment, paused in proof
Of her most kind solicitude,
To place me neath a sheltering roof
In friendly cover of the wood,
Safe from the keen pursuers' wrath,
Out of the random bullets' path,
And far removed from any shade
Of dark suspicion that would tend
To criminate me if I staid
With them unto the bitter end.
And then she told me how she fought
Above his body, to the death,
And how her heaving bosom caught
And drank his very latest breath.

On this sad theme for hours she dwelt,
Repeating oft the grief she felt,
Till she more calmly silent lay
Upon my arm, and ceased to weep,
And far on toward the coming day
Had sighed and sobbed herself to sleep;
Yet in her slumber, long and deep,
She did not, could not cease to grieve;
Long gasping, sobbing signs would heave
Her beating bosom, pressed to mine.

And now, ah! now in after years,
The sough of winds along a pine
Calls up that cruel night of tears,
And of the fateful stroke of "one;"
The phantom of its memory hears
Those long-drawn, sobbing sighs that run
Avenging daggers through my heart.

You've often asked me why I start
Awake at that lone hour, and wild;
Why o'er a sobbing, slumbering child,
I do with such compassion bend,
As does become its dearest friend?
You've asked this question o'er and o'er,
But you will ask it now, no more.
And I, too, slept and slumbered on,
Long after that bright morning broke.
At last I slowly roused and woke
To find she was not there — was gone.

CANTO VI.

I felt then, from the very first,
All search for her would be in vain,
And not because I feared the worst.
If she had kept until the last
The frenzy of her first despair,
I should have known all hope was past
When I looked on the cabin, bare
And cold, with her no longer there.

She must have suddenly resolved
To be to me no stumbling block;
Whate'er the blow, whate'er the shock,
I should be utterly absolved
From every true or fancied tie
That Fate or Chance about us wound.
That I, completely, be unbound,
She could not choose, but needs must fly.

And then distinctly came to me,
Her pictured presence grayly clad
In retrospective drapery,
Regretful and supremely sad,
As momently she paused and took
The last, the lingering, yearning look,
Then far into the rosy day,
Like some lone wild bird, flew away.

I did not then go fully down
Into the deeper after-glooms,
That came upon me in the town,
And filled the air of streets and rooms

With shadows of funereal plumes.
I had not yielded every hope,
I said, "No power with Love can cope,
No cavern of this earthly ball,
No trackless depth of forest wide
Can this one woman safely hide,
Who is my own, and is my all!"

But hours and days grew into weeks
Of such slow tortures as the mind
Must feel, that vainly strives to find
The one and only thing it seeks;
And constantly to wear a mask
And show the wonted interest
In what had been my daily task,
Was most severely trying test —
A test I did but illy bear;
But still, the busy city took
No measure of the added care
That hung upon my former look,
But left me, what I would, to wear.

And all these days her slender track
From cabin door to water's edge,
Lost in the river's rustling sedge,
For days and days did draw me back,
And in my long and narrow yawl
I took the only souvenir
Her care for me had left, of her
The same brown, soft, oft-doubled shawl
Which held that night my feverish form,
And in the sunshine and the storm —
Fort Harrison to Grassy Pond,

And even miles and miles beyond —
I wore it doubled on my arm
As devotee might wear a charm,
Or as some knight of old, mayhap,
In token of his loyal love,
Oft wore his absent lady's glove
Upon the visor of his cap;
Till I had scanned each single foot
Of that wild river's sandy bank,
And found no signs that woman's boot
Had in its oozy sedges sank,
And when a pouring autumn rain
Had islanded the cabin hill,
And all the yellow, swirling plain
Threw down its sand on track and sill,
These voyages I did give o'er,
And track and cabin saw no more.

But, still, the river I did haunt;
It seemed to hold me with a spell;
The shadows that upon it fell,
The fringing sycamores so gaunt,
All seemed to draw me in the night,
With outstretched, yearning arms of white,
Recalling still that feverish flight
And each fantastic circumstance;
The night attack; the running fight;
The dreamy battle of the wood;
The meeting that fell out of chance;
The cabin lone, which silent stood
And whispered to the yellow flood,
With hushed suspicion, every word

Its aged garrulity had heard;
Like circling stag, on my own track,
The river thus did woo me back;
I learned the Wabash then to like,
As if it were a growing friend;
Each long and graceful, sweeping bend,
Each shadowy bayou, crumbling dyke
Of soggy drift, that, day by day,
The wearing currents wore away,
And shallow, pebble-shingled bars
With feathery willow fringe of green;
Its dead trees in the distance seen,
So tall and tapering and straight
They seem the smooth and yarded spars
Of fleets that there at anchor wait.

And O! the night with crescent moon!
The river's trailing central streak
Of yellow light, that I did seek,
As if it were the sweetest boon;
And that quaint harmony of sounds
That to a wooded stream belongs,
Here, more than otherwhere abounds;
The strains of unknown night-bird's songs,
The hurtling wings of waterfowls,
The leap of striking fish that splash
Through limpid circles at a dash;
The warning cry of watching owls;
The sedgy edges, wet and rank,
The untried shadows of the bank,
The boundless waste, and somber-hued,
The vast uncertain solitude,

Filled with strange voices of the dark,
And peopled with the legends, old,
Of ambushed warriors, brown and bold;
And oft and oft some spectral bark,
Some ripple of a ghostly oar,—
Though farthest, faintest sound of all
That on my straining ears could fall—
Would thrill my bosom to its core,
As these flew by me in the shade
By overhanging willows made,
And kept a faintly sounding track
Adown the shadows, weird and black.
Though every muscle, every nerve,
I strained in desperate pursuit,
The jut of some too sudden curve,
Some intervening willow's shoot,
Still interposed to veil from sight
Her fragile boat's mysterious flight.
Though oft I dropped my oars, and bent
A strained, attentive, listening ear,
The only sounds that I could hear
Were such as with the drumperch went,
Whose long-roll I could hear and feel
In mimic thunder down the keel.

And, too, the cool and rippled swirl,
Where shadowy willow branches laid
Their tawny wands that sawed and swayed
Against the current's eddying whirl;—
Faint intonations softly slipped,
As if they had been tongued and lipped,
So sweetly fancy would persuade
That her low voice the music made.

And oft and oft the ruddy glare
From anglers' lonely camp, at night,
Shot up a sudden yellow flare
That tipped the leafy limbs with light,
And streamed across the watery ways
In long and slender, shimmering blaze,
That made me think her lighted lamp
Shown in the long-deserted camp;
While willow thickets yet concealed
The strange belongings of the place,
But disappointingly revealed
Some well-known spot and common face.

And these exciting nights and days
Did on my wonted habits wear;
A look that hinted of despair
My hollow, restless eyes did blaze;
And other eyes did pry and seek
To read the story of my look;
The waning color of my cheek;
The paths my nervous footsteps took,
'Till, later on, I chanced to note
That when I rowed away from shore
A long and swift, but stealthy, boat
Flew after me with silent oar,
And followed me for many a mile
In some persistent, secret chase.
I led it, too, from place to place,
Through each perplexing waterway,
Whose intricacies I had learned
In these exploring trips by day,
And oft the wearied rower turned

And, baffled, stopped and put about;
'Till one dark night, when prow to prow
We ran — I scarce remember how —
Brought mutual explanations out.

He was a human ferret, small;
For all the ferret ways he tried,
For all the cunning plans he plied,
He seemed to have perpetual call.
Some desperado he did seek —
One who had lain securely hid
Among the willows, many a week.
Some zealous County Board had bid
For his swift capture such a purse
As large outlay would reimburse,
And leave a very generous sum
For him who should the thief o'ercome.
My each inexplicable cruise
To him had seemed so like the ruse
Of one who carries food or news
To tangled, covert, hiding-place.
He'd lurked some nights along my course,
My devious wanderings to trace;
But found, he said, I sought no worse
Companionship than just my own,
And might be safely left alone.

Then grew on me the haunting thought:
This beauteous woman that I sought,
Who had so quickly deeply grown
About my being and above,
And through, and through me, till my love
Is not a passion man may own,

But frenzy such as may dethrone
The calmer faculties of mind—
This worshipped idol I must find—
Might she not be—in ages flown
Such strange, unearthly things were known—
The Naiad of this river lone?
This strangest river that doth keep
The wildness of its primal plan,
Despite of time, or fate, or man.
In every overwhelming sweep
Of its resistless, annual flood;
Its vast exuberance of bud,
And tropic growth of vine and weed
That with the season's utmost speed,
Doth still, year after year, efface
Each trace, the very faintest trace,
Of labor, set to utmost bent
Against the mightiest element.

This river, like an ancient grot
Of some unmapped sea-island grove,
Or dangerous coral-reef-barred cove,
In all the ages, changes not,
But keeps its olden mythic mien.
Then here, ah! here should still be seen
Those glorious women, that of old
Gave an eternity of bliss
In one embrace, one thrilling kiss
Of almost beatific power,
The growth, the property, the dower,
Of their antique celestial mold.

And now I think her hair of gold,
Her luminous and pallid skin,
Her eyes of deep and mystic blue;
Her instant power to charm and win;
Her thought that did my own pursue
And surely instantly divine
The very heart of thought of mine,
And every aspiration drew
From secret caverns of my breast;
Her strange inexplicable zest
Of mere existence—simple life;
Her superhuman aptitude
For every wide diverging mood
Of tender love—of mortal strife
With mortal foes, with weapons rude;
Her joy in water, wind and storm,
The matchless beauties of her form,
As I remember how it shone
Within the fragile swinging boat,
With but the sun and I alone
To stand amazed and bend and gloat,
Until, upon some memory page,
Her beauteous picture lies, sun-drawn
In all the glowing tints of dawn,
Undimmed by wear or touch of age;
These thoughts come thronging with the proof
That will no longer stand aloof;
She is, she was, she must have been
A Naiad! aye! the Naiad queen!
And such an one as song or rhyme
Or tale, or harp of olden time,
Has never sung, nor told, nor strung;

And I, ah, me! I, foolish, flung,
As only foolish man can fling,
The love of this immortal thing—
This fairy of the water-world—
As that sad sage of legend, hurled
The charméd pebble in the sea,
And lost to all Philosophy
The secret of the universe;
By treating as a common sand
The priceless jewel of the strand,
So I, O! infinitely worse,
And rashly, recklessly, have thrown
For once and all the magic stone
Into some watery wilderness
Of stormy depths, and fathomless;
And now I haunt the empty shore,
And pick my daily pebbles, yet
Of wild remorse and vain regret;
And though I pick them every day,
I may not even throw away
One grain of these, forevermore;
But bear a daily growing load
Along a bleak and cheerless road.

But once her mortal glory shone
On gloomy bayous, limpid springs;
And there the white Druse sighs and sings
Through mem'ry's chambers dim and lone,
And makes each present hour her own.

And so, I turned about and turned,
And ran like some long-hunted beast
Wherever there appeared the least

The faintest light of hope that burned,
Till every stump and stone and bush
Became as wearisome and stale,
And vapid, as an oft-told tale.

And I would whirl from these, and push
My way in sated wretchedness,
Where'er I deemed I had not been;
But O! the flutter of a dress,
A robe of some pale shade of green,
A stooping tuft of yellow plumes,
Like delicate, aurelian glumes
That wave above the goldenrod!
To see these fluttering fly and nod,
At some far crossing of a street
Did make my heart so hotly beat,
The blood stream up into my face:
And then my eager, flying feet
Ran on that oft-repeated chase,
So swift at first, so quickly slowed
When soon the narrowed distance showed
Some form that no resemblance bore
To any look or thing she wore.

And any doubled, soft, brown shawl
On any woman's shoulders crossed
Will, to this very day, recall
A sudden sense of something lost,
A sudden sinking of the heart,
A tremble of the lip, a start,
And after all this lapse of time,
And all the wear of age and clime!

And if I ever needed aught
To make me know this high above,
And vastly more than human love,
The long recurrence of this thought,
In all these years, this knowledge brought.

And so the spirit of unrest
Did every moment hunt and haunt
The secret places of my breast,
And place its spectral fingers, gaunt,
About my own, and lead me where
The ways were dark ways of despair.

Until my friends, with grave concern,
Began to hedge me round about
With iron manacles of doubt,
That, wheresoever I could turn,
Did cramp and fetter me, and bind
The cold and galling gyves of mind
Upon the white limbs of my soul.
I could not brook the skilled control
They held upon my every hour:
In vain I tried each boasted power,
Each antidote Society
Proposes for all mental ills—
A sort of moral liver pills—
Against the dull satiety
That with its peccant humors fills
The slower blood of idle life,
Unquickened by the tonic, Strife;
Emaciate, because it stands
Aloof from Labor's work of hands.

Just then our veteran regiment
Was starting gaily to the front.
So long they'd borne the very brunt
Of every fierce and bloody fight
The gods of modern battle knew
That they'd been ordered to renew
Their strength at home, on furlough sent.
They made a stirring martial sight,
With flying flags and rifles bright.
They halted in the dusty street,
And from my window, leaning out,
I heard a well-known comrade greet
Me with a friendly hearty shout:
"We want you in the Forty-third;
Come on! come now!" He was my friend
Long ere this half-spent war began;
Much of my story he had heard.
Impulsive, down the steps I ran
And through the ranks my way did wend
Until beside his horse I stood
And grasped his hand in friendly mood.
"'Tis but some minutes till we go,
I, something of your story know.
Own yours an aggravated case;
But Love is all a myth, a name;
War is the only manly game.
I have, just now a vacant place
Upon the staff. Come and forget
Your broken heart in broken bones!
Your ears shall hear no other moans
Than those caused by the limbs you set."

He finished with his merry laugh.
"The vacant place upon the staff
Is mine," I said. "From this hour on
In preparations time will fly,
'Till evening's sun shall see me gone!"

"Bravo! Meet me at Phillippi,
Or, what's the same, at Evansville!
To-morrow, I have heard, we will
Weigh anchor, set a merry sail,
Or steam it, as the case may be,
For some port on the Tennessee.
Good bye! my new recruit, don't fail!"
A bugle blast, a cloud of dust
Between me and my friend was thrust.

CANTO VII.

My heart was, for the moment, light,
When from the steamer's upper deck
I saw, before the fall of night,
The roaring wheels the waters fleck
With mimic billows, crests of foam;
I scarce bethought me of my home
My father's earnest hands had made
Within the Prairie City's shade.
I thought not of the sacrifice
That days and months must still be his.
And even now, the steamer's roar,
The quaking shiver of the boat,
The dim and speculative shore,
The strident whistle's sounding note;

The bright head-lights of red and green —
Far in the hollow darkness seen;
The trampling of a thousand feet,
The laugh, the chorus and the jest
On every hand my ear did greet,
And kept distraction at its best,
Nor, let me feel the full effect
Of any startling retrospect.

And I may freely, here, confess
The glossy plumes upon my hat,
The jaunty fit of my new dress,
The glitter of my saber hilt
In filagree of finest gilt;
The pressure of my martial belt
Now for the first time fairly felt
The deep, instinctive love of arms,
Born of the olden warrior days,
When morning broke in war's alarms,
And evening closed in closing frays;
All these did change my wonted bent
And made me almost half content.

And while I stood and watched the crowd
From some small sheltered nook, apart,
My friend's deep voice, and very loud,
And from behind, did make me start:

"Look here, sir! this will never do
For one who wears the martial blue
So neatly, jauntily as you!
From stem to stern of this old hulk,
Persistently for you I've sought,
And with a message I have brought,

And from the very prettiest girl!
They form a party there below,
A very merry one, I know.
They fairly made my old head whirl
With all they sung and all they said;
If I were not already wed,
I would—at least, perhaps I might!—
The General's daughter—silver-mine,
With stocks and bonds, and all the rest!
Some lucky fellow will be blest;
And I declare if I were white
As you, and looked but half so fine,
I would n't let this merry night
Go by, and slip away this chance
For—well, a bit of rare romance.
I've advertised you over well,
By liberty I took to tell
Somewhat of your romantic tale;
You know me—know I could n't fail
To throw in rich embellishment,
That must effectually disguise—
Till you would scarcely recognize—
Your story, nor one incident;
But, out of hand, I did invent
One more romantic, every way;
'Twill serve as well, I dare to say.
They bade me, instantly, to go
And fetch you—with your will, or no.
Remember now, your present role,
The lover lorn, who madly throws
His life away among his foes;
You look it, too, upon my soul!"

"But will not such a role preclude—"
I hesitatingly did ask,
"How much you know of woman's mood?"
He cut me off with half a sneer,
And cried with philosophic leer,
"It is the very lightest task
Before a handsome fellow set.
There never was a woman yet,
Who took not deepest interest—
Nay, keenest of enjoyment felt
In setting all her charms to test
A vulnerable lover's truth,
To wear his lover-scalp in sooth
In triumph at her gentle belt!
Now hush, and all your wits prepare
To meet this very dangerous fair!
Don't move your hat till we are there;
Those feathers lend you royal air."

I sought to make some late excuse,
But found it was of little use;
His was a humorous, kindly heart,
And one that mostly had its way
By sheer good humor—and, in part,
By obstinacy, some would say,
And overwhelming self conceit.
Whate'er he said or did was mete,
His strong complaisance promptly seized
The very heights of self applause,
Nor dreamt that others might have cause
For discontent, though he was pleased.

He was a leader, born and bred,
And opposition could not brook.
Men followed wheresoe'er he led,
And yet, perhaps, his leading took
The very paths already taught
In theory, by public thought,
The politician skilled indeed
To follow where he seemed to lead.
Reluctantly I followed, too,
Nor knew a wiser thing to do.

The cabin mirror caught my view
And whispered me a flattering tale;
A broad white brow; a cheek too pale,
Curved lips and softly rounded chin
That some small dimples nestled in;
White teeth shone in a pensive smile
That I had only learned of late,—
A softening lesson of my fate.
This was the foolish, boyish thought
The mirror's kind reflection brought;
A face well fitted to beguile
A journey of its tediousness,
For women tired, awhile, of dress.
This thought, nay all thought, vanished quite
Before an eye, soft, brown and bright;
A fair face full of mirthfulness;
A pretty, teasing, bantering look,
That held you safely till you took
Upon yourself some bright impress
Of her infectious carelessness.

Of carelessness not in the sense
In which the word is all misused
And its fair meaning much abused;
But lacking hint of care; and hence
Without it; and without pretense,
And with that frank, confiding air,
The sweet insignia everywhere
Of purest and of kindliest heart;
I saw, with something like a start,
Her frequent glances on me thrown.
While she was singing lover-lays,
Her every warm and heartful phrase
Some secret sympathy did own,
And in her songs she seemed to seek
For those that did most deeply speak
Of love that bore the heavy cross
Of disappointment, and of loss.
And these she made significant
With that quick darting of her eyes,
That from their corners shot aslant
And did my inner thought surprise,
Deep hidden as it seemed to be
Within my breast's obscurity,
Until I oft did shrink and flush
The awkward school-boy's ready blush.

I know not how the minutes fled,
I know the night had almost sped;
She sang alone; and then we sang
Duets of martial doggerel—
Some of the many things that sprang
Quick into favor, quickly fell

Into a merited neglect,—
The fate of songs of thoughtless sound—
And one old ditty, too, she found,
That, instantly, I did suspect
Had special meaning for my ear,
That I was little loath to hear.

"Let me love my love a day,
While the bloom is on the heather;
Love must flit and fly away
Long before the winter weather.

Love, alone, shall keep my breast,
While my heart within is glowing;
Love is sweetest, love is best,
While the blood is fastest flowing.

Let me turn me from my path;
'Tis the day for fullest loving!
Love for one but one day hath,
To-morrow love must be a-moving.

Love is universal—one;
Every various human creature
By the lover gazed upon
Hath love's very form and feature."

She looked at me and ceased to sing,
But with unconscious fingering
Still softly smote the sounding string
In all the sweet, consonant ways,
And kept on me her steady gaze;
Then in a voice so low, my head
I stooped, to listen what she said:

"Your brows into a frown are bent!
You disapprove the sentiment!
Or, are you merely bored and tired
Like all, save me, who am inspired
The agony to still prolong
While there is one to hear a song?"

She laughed and then I saw she took
A quick and almost furtive look
That flew across where gaily sat
A group in light and merry chat.
My surgeon friend, a lady tall,
A man who sat against the wall,
Huge, broad, surprisingly obese;
Of haughty, inconsiderate way;
As if he held perpetual lease
On everything that round him lay.
He seemed to listen, speaking not,
But fixed his gaze upon the spot
Where thoughtfully Annita bent
Above the murmuring instrument.

I thought I saw some sort of sign—
A scowling movement of his brow;
A look all sinister, malign;
Directed where? and moving how?
Annita, angry, flushing rose,
Then came so near her rustling clothes,
Her black, becoming silken dress
Against me thrillingly did press.
A moment did her fluttering palm
Lie, like a rose-leaf, in my own.
Where was the armor of my calm?

Where had my self-possession flown?
I stammered o'er some lame regret,
Or said, "And must you go so soon?"
Or phrased it, "Do not leave me yet!"
Or, "Gentle damsel, grant a boon;
Another war-song, please, that I
Be reconciled, nay glad, to die."
At this her pretty brow was cleared,
And like her merry self appeared.
She drew her glove and threw it down
In mimic of the "star's" stage-frown;
"Meet me to-morrow ere the sun—"
"Hath more than half his journey run?"
I interrupted laughingly.
She laughed a quick response of glee,
"O cunning marplot, so, 't will do;
No seconds—only lunch for two—
And if you fail your sentence is,
War-songs with awful choruses."

She smiled above her feather fan,
And put her slender finger-tip
In mocking warning to her lip.
Her sidewise, slanting glances ran
A sort of zigzag lightning track
Towards that huge, frowning man and back
Till very meaningly on me
They rested; lightly she began:
"Remember, gentle knight, to me
Thy pledge! To-morrow much betide;
A tete-a-tete; a lunch beside;
And"—here the furtive look again;
Was it of anger or of pain?

She floated down the cabin side
As some soft shadow of a cloud;
I nothing said, but stood and bowed,
Until her closing state-room door
Left me as moody as before.

And all along the wakeful night
The picture leaflets of my brain
I turned and turned about again—
Her merry glance, so warm and bright,
And here and there a lighted page
Of graceful, saucy badinage;
Nor this did contemplate for long,
But turned as quickly to the song,
And brief, repeated glimpses took
Of tragic gesture, roguish look,
And every phrase that did imply
Some meaning of sweet flattery,
And every gesture, every word
Of mocking speech or tender tone
Sprang up from something of my own,
My own reflections, saw and heard.

And then the meaning of her glance
At that huge watcher, where he sat,
To take no part in chaffy chat,
But only eyed us twain, askance,
And bent his brows on me and her
With meaning look and sinister.
Who was he? and what sort of right
Did this outright surveillance mean,
That kept her ever in his sight?
He had no care if it were seen;

Was he a guardian, or of kin?
Or did he seek, himself, to win?

And, too, the Aunt had seemed to me
A trifle cool, but all polite
Her words, her manner perfect quite,
Save something I could dimly see
Within her jetty, glittering eyes,
And in her raised and arching brow
The superciliousness that lies
So delicately on a face
That doubtfully, we seek to trace
And fasten it, as I do now.

And after all, it well may be
That natural antipathy
Coal-black eyed people feel for me;
Which had remotest origin
In martial, mediæval time
When blue-eyed Saxon, black-eyed Frank,
In daily battle's storm and din
Deep draughts of lasting hatred drank.
A curious illustration this—
A mode of motions endlessness—
Pre-natal influence, long excess
Of ethnic traits may thus impress
Themselves on race or tribe and be
Man's masters, through heredity.

Did not Annita plainly shun
Him? yes, and so avoid them both,
Until the night was wholly done?
And I could take a solemn oath,
She bade them cold good-night with ease

That did most strikingly contrast
With words and looks that, to the last,
She, smiling back upon me, cast
With grace to gratify and please.

And thus these night reflections drew
Me slowly on to contemplate
Myself — my rounded figure, blue
And belted, crowned with martial plumes —
The budding soldier's feather glumes —
Until my thoughts dimmed into dream,
And other scenes did interpose:
A wood, a lonely hut uprose,
A level, western sun agleam
Upon the yellow Wabash tide,
The dripping shiver of the boat,
A memory that sobbed and wept,
And sobbed and sighed the while I slept.

CANTO VIII.

There are, in every human life,
Some almost perfect, happy days,
So far removed from thought of strife,
So mellowed in a summer haze
Of dim forgetfulness, they lie
Beneath some brighter tinted sky
That softens down, or closes out
Each rugged mountain crag of doubt,
And holds without a blur or blot
The growing beauties of the spot;
Where all the current of the years

Flows softly, or in eddies 'round
About the Isles of Memory wound,
All tearless, in a world of tears.
And there the battered mortal ship
Delights to furl its sails and dip
Its anchor in some sunny wave,
Like that old mariner who gave
Some weeks or months to the Blest Bay
Where, in a rippling mist of blue,
The Isles of Fortunatus lay,
And there his idle pennon flew
Until his battle garlands grew
As strange as hated wreaths of rue.

So I, in all this after time,
Have here an oft-recurring stage
In life's swift circling pilgrimage,
A flowery land of Summer clime
Where, like a bird, my spirit flies
When windy winter flecks the skies.

Upon a perfect autumn morn,
September's gauzy mantle blue
O'er all the farther hills she threw
And trailed above the yellow corn,
And here and there she pinned a fold
With brooches of the maple's gold,
And here and there did coyly droop
A dim, suggestive, shadowy loop
O'er some wide hollow, wooded deep
Below its overhanging steep;
A brooch of diamonds at her throat
Farcast, the glimmering waves afloat.

A step behind me on the guard!
"Who holds such early watch and ward?
Think you your Naiad Queen may keep
In yon dark pools a hiding-place
That you so soon desert your sleep
And bend, with sad and searching face,
An all-absorbed and earnest glance?
Knight of the Doleful Countenance!"

"Not so. But here my nymph I wait,
Slow coming from her room of State,
A Cleopatra — queen — that still
Can lead her warriors where she will,"
I answered, echoing her mood;
A moment she impatient stood
And looked about with clouded brow,
A moment turned away her head
And absently and frowning said:
"There stalked my Antony but now!"
I, too, did turn and looked about,
And at a closing door I saw
A ponderous figure quick withdraw
And from his vision shut us out;
But ere I could, in sooth, divine
This episode, she brightly let
Her sun of merry mischief shine —
And is she, then, a mere coquette?
And what my chief had said, again
Came to me, with a pang of pain.
"One lover-scalp," I mused or felt,
"Shall never dangle at her belt!"
But her next words so on me wrought
They banished all unworthy thought.

"I think that in our later lives
There is not less devoted love
Than, in the olden time, did move
Earth's mighty men and their good wives;
But in our polished after-day
We make a study to conceal
What depth of passion we may feel;
We act a fair, dissembling play.

"But pardon me, I beg to say
That you amuse me very much;
You, who sincerely love and grieve,
Wear your sad heart upon your sleeve;
You yield an instant to my touch
Of pleasantry and merry jest,
And, but an instant at the best,
And then you white and frigid grow
As marble, or as frozen snow.
And this frigidity withal
Does on each woeful feature fall,
And falling, fastens, darkly there,
The somber shadow of despair.
You have no skill to wear a mask,
And so I find — amusing task —
An easy and instructive part,
In gazing on a human heart —
A heart in love and sore distress;
Attractive by ingenuousness."

A merry sparkle in her eyes,
A pretty, half contemptuous curl
Along her lips did flit and twirl;
I showed annoyance, shame, surprise,

And brusquely said: "I'm glad to know
Such rare discovery pleases you;
I hope you'll keep it in your view,
And to your nearest neighbors show;
But you, your powers depreciate;
It is not that I am denied
The all essential skill to hide
The color of my secret thought;
But that some occult power has taught
Your keener sight to penetrate
The inner soul's environment,
And see its large or small intent."

"So my skilled vision splinters through
Yon mountain veil of velvet blue,
Beholding plainly, bole and frond
And shadowy forest trees beyond;
While your unpracticed eye can see
Nor bole, nor frond, nor forest tree.
So, too, I think that I perceive
What might have made another grieve,
Not that I venture to accuse;
But did not one premeditate
Herself, and others, to amuse
And break the tedium of a cruise,
With all the piquancies that wait
Upon the story of a fate,
Of love and loss and frenzied search!
Of bats that fly; and kites that perch!
All properties that never fail
To garnish true romantic tale?"

Her laughing eyes upon me turned,
Her cheek an instant faintly burned,
Then merrily, recovering quite:
"And if I did was I not right?
Who in these merchant days shall dare,
In wanton cruelty or spite,
A deep, true passion to conceal?
Such culprit must be made to feel
The common vengeance of the fair.
What! rob us of our only glance
Of real, passionate romance?
These stray and sparsely flitting beams
From Love's long-hidden central skies
That blind our unused mortal eyes,
Would you retire to realms of dreams?
Then were you such a Robber Knight
As Arthur from his Table Round
Sent out his knights and slew or bound,
For grievances to maidens done.
Reflect, ere it shall be too late
To mend the evil thus begun.
Remember, I, and such as I,
May go our many ways and die,
With lamentations on that fate
That gave us glimpse, but snatched away
The one resplendent moulted plume
Which Love's seraphic wings display,
Till fluttering down across the gloom
Into your hands it haply whirled,
But to be hidden from the world."

Some jesting answer I had coined,
But, as she ceased, her features took

A hard, sarcastic, bitter look,
And so I seriously rejoined:

"There are some feelings so intense,
So quickly and so rankly grown,
They shut out every other sense
Not tributary to their own.
These are the Passions; and the chief,
Love has been ever, and must be;
It comprehends Joy, Hate and Grief,
Revenge and withering Jealousy.
All sense and feeling it subjects,
And so, no cunning sense protects
The undefended human heart,
But leaves it shelterless, apart,
The butt for coarser ridicule;
The laughing-stock of every fool;
And, too, remembrances it stores
Of pitying interest — such as yours."

Her eyes, quick lifting, met my own,
A conscious smile, a pretty flush
That almost grew into a blush,
But died away ere it had grown,
And left her silent, wrapped in thought,
With glance that still my glances sought,
But did so long and steadfast stay
As showed her vision far away.

"Ah, railer, where is now your jibe?
Are you, too, of my mooning tribe?
A disappointed lover, too,
Who hunts the wide world through and through?

I reach you sympathetic hand;
We will together through the land,
Companions of a kindred guest,
Our search renew with added zest.
But tell me if your dryad be
With my lost nymph in Tennessee?"

"Gramercy, gentle knight! but I,—
I must confess me somehow hit,
But were you not so dull of wit
You would not deem my lovers fly
And leave me, your small cause to sigh.
Nay, if you will but be so kind
To cast a rearward, casual glance,
Not straightly staring, but askance,
I think, perhaps, that you might find
My bold pursuer standing there,
Assuming thus a careless air,
Pretending deeply to engage
With my brave Aunt in wordy flights
In the domain of Woman's Rights;
But really he is in a rage,
Consuming with a fiery hate
Of you, for this long tete-a-tete."

When she had spoken, from my place
I turned and looked toward the spot,
And met an angry glance that shot
From out a red and puffy face;
A glance that darted and turned down,
And burrowed underneath a frown,
And shook, with heavings of offense,
His huge, unwieldy corpulence.

I knew he was a railroad king—
One of those tyrants that our law
Permits by trickery to draw
The Nation's surpluses, and bring
The legislative hand to bear
The people's earnings, still, to steal.
"Bond stock" and "dividend" and "share"—
The words that strongest do appeal
To demagogues' cupidity
And popular stupidity;
He knew them as a tune, and made
Of them a most lucrative trade.

But "options" were his chief delight,
And did engross him day and night;
Sometimes one live wire he would pull,
And run the market high and higher;
A most enthusiastic "Bull";
Anon he took the other wire,
And the mercurial, margin air
Made blue with growlings of the "Bear."
But whether he did masquerade
As "Bull" or "Bear" was all the same—
This magnate of the Board of Trade
Held winning cards in either game.
The meshes of his net did coil
About the dullard world of toil;
And all the produce of the soil,
The increase of the flock and field,
Their tithings to his grasp did yield;
And his keen cravings sharpened thrice
By cultivated avarice,
No longer with a State content

Reached out to grasp a continent.
And taking from the French a phrase
Coined out of their corruptest days,
The mighty "Credit Mobilier"
Appealed to legislative sway,
And Congress gave into his hands
A vast domain of fertile lands
That statesmen once designed to be
The free homes of a nation's free,
And vaster than the vast domain
Did on the greatest Roman wait,
That unto Cæsar tribute paid
When Rome ruled all the world, and made
Her sons corrupt, and rich and great.

It is that history repeats
Herself, that in our modern Rome,
From hovel unto gilded dome,
All nobleness and virtue meets
And falls before the power of wealth;
And so the Nation's moral health
Falls into swift decrepitude.
O! for the time of old, the rude,
Brave Spartan time once more to bring
Upon our too luxurious days
The hard disciplinarian ways
Of Lacedæmon's iron King!
A time of Labor's Liberty—
Equality, Fraternity!

But why so idly rail and prate?
The most heroic may not breast
The tide of individual fate;

Let us be drifting with the rest;
They are no niggard company;
Toss up thy cap, and take thy fee!

"Is he not splendid who doth know
Pleasure and profit to combine?
Thus, though a-wooing he may go,
His business interests never pine;
He 's made some advantageous sales
Or purchases of cotton bales,
Captured, perchance, by Union troops;
And, eagle-like, adown he swoops
Upon the field of martial toils,
Not in, but safe behind the fight."
"Your simile makes him a kite;
A vulture battling on the spoils,"
I said with gossip's keen delight.

"My rhetoric is always right;
The figure was not smelt, but forged
At one fell blow. A vulture gorged
He looks, and far too stuffed for flight."
I laughed immoderately, but saw
A look of loathing and disgust,
Like some black veil that she did draw
Across her face; a mask she thrust,
All scowling, that did promptly slip
First o'er her laughter-curving lip,
Thence upward a swift way it took,
And, as some careful gleaner, gleaned
The beauteous brightness from her look
And left her visaged like a fiend.

For some apt phrase I vainly toiled;
In truth I knew not what to say,
But felt that something must be said,
And so jocosely talked away:
"The heavy villain must be foiled,
And the fair, persecuted maid
Be rescued, gallantly, forsooth,
By poor but nobly honest youth."

I looked to see if then she smiled,
But still my swift and covert glance
Showed her with lowering countenance.

"You talk as if I were a child."
And then her toes a fierce tattoo
Beat, angrily, upon the floor —
You 've seen an angry woman do
The same, and many a time before.

And then, as from an inner light,
I saw her nobler womanhood,
In thought, I bowed me at the sight,
And spoke in all-indignant mood:

"I swear my sister should not wed
One whom she did not wholly love!
You, of all others, are above
Such bonds as bind the lower-bred;
There is no power to make you bend
To mere convenience's base end."

"I wish you were my brother, then.
There is no creature among men
Who finds less favor in my eyes,
Or I more bitterly despise,

Than yon great wretch who haunts me so
And follows everywhere I go.
I thought he had but little taste
For war; and so, I made great haste
To follow Papa to his tent
As did the martial maids of old.
And, at out-starting, here behold
This vast, persistent monster bent
Upon this self-same journey, too!
Now tell me, what am I to do?"

"Give him," I cry, "some deep offense;
Rail at him; sneer, and jeer, and scoff,
Until you send him packing off."

"He has my Papa's confidence;
Is Papa's friend and honored guest,
And here, I think, at his request.
I must be carefully polite
To whom my Papa may invite!
I know I do transcend all bounds
Of my good breeding when I make
The deadly hurt of my heart-wounds,
A loud remonstrance that I take
Unto an almost stranger's ears;
But the excitement and the fears,—
Compressed intensities of war
That presses into moments, years,—
These make my swift excuses for
This loud complaint so rashly laid
To stranger Knight, by stranger maid,"
She laughed and looked demurely down
From covert of her lashes brown.

"Not strangers; for somehow, I knew
At our first meeting some strong tie,
Some secret, potent bond did lie,
And coil and wind about us two."

She smiled: "And did *you* lie awake
And think of all we sung and said
And turn and think, until your head
Like mine did fairly whirl and ache?"

"O, fairest seer, 'twas even so.
Those wretched songs, your merry laugh,
Mischievous glance, and cheek aglow
Made mental nectar sweet to quaff.
They set my very brain awhirl
And made me giddy as a girl."
"And gave you, then, no thought to her,
Your Pallid, Golden Wanderer?"

She seemed to fix me with a glance
That fell upon me as a trance.
I sat in silence, mute, and long
My brain was busy, with a throng
Of sudden, crushing memories.
A glimpse of golden, wooded seas;
A cabin, and a slender boat
Along the misty stream afloat;
A brown and soft, oft-doubled shawl
That pillowed me and kept from harm;
A ghastly, slipping funeral yawl;
A woman lying on my arm,
Who long and bitterly did weep,
And sobbed and sighed throughout her sleep;
A reminiscence this did seem

Of some almost forgotten dream.
Had I so quickly drawn away
From all the things of yesterday?

I felt a hand my arm to press
With such instinctive tenderness
As grew into a soft caress.

"Poor fellow! I was very rude
To put you in such harrowing mood.
Pray, let me make my full amends;
Let us two be the warmest friends;
And lest you think this is too soon
To grant, unasked, so dear a boon,
My one small plot I must reveal,
Although I purposed to conceal:
On that first evening I did plan
The very heaven and earth to move
To bring to you your flitting love,
And with the thought my action ran;
I instantly did organize —
An expedition set on foot,
That, did it promise boot or loot,
Right quickly would secure the prize.
I wish the enterprise good speed;
My ponderous lover takes the lead,
And all that he has seen to-day
Will make him eager for the way;
A double purpose thus I own —
I'd kill two birds with this one stone.
Some days yon creature will be gone; —
To love my tribute thus I pay,
And of sweet freedom take a lease;
Thus with my conscience make my peace."

"Peace! Tribute! O, I scorn the whole
Uncandid phraseology
That seeks to make apology
For woman with a prideful soul
Who sells it, or permits it sold,
For few or many pounds of gold.
Were I a woman such as you,
And held my buyer in such hate
As gives no promise to abate,
There are some things I would not do;
But as the soldier Cæsar fed
And schooled, when beaten, could afford
To fall upon a friendly sword
Far better than be captive led,
I'd make a most determined fight;
And in the very worst event
My friendly sword should me content,
Or, what is better, nearer right,
The great heart of the world does feel
And it should hear my last appeal."

She turned on me a beaming look;
And clasped my hand between her own.
Her voice sank down, a little shook,
And there was earnest in its tone,
And in the quiver of her lip.
That instant, her true heart did slip
Its mask away and show to me
At once, far more than I might see
In years of mere acquaintanceship.

She said: "Yours is the only word
In these two years, that I have heard

That into sounding echoes start
The silent protest of my heart.
All social cant I have been taught,
All forceful pressure, short of force,
Has momently upon me wrought,
And Time has worked his wonted course,
That all resistance can remove.
I had no strong sustaining love,
To hold me fast, and give me strength,
I came to see my fate, at length,
Without the horror and the pain
Of slave that first can feel the chain.
But these two days I have rebelled;
Again my former purpose held,
To suffer, even banishment
From every dear familiar tie,
Aye! do the very worst, and die
Ere I be driven to consent."

She tried to draw her hands away,
But I did forcefully detain;
Some moments neither word did say,
I traveled o'er her words again:
"I had no strong love to sustain."
And: "These two days I have rebelled."
I turned these phrases o'er and held
Them, here and there, in every light;
Each time they grew more clear and bright;
My wish, interpretation gave:
"I did consent; but now rebel."
"I had no love; but now I have."
Again and yet again these fell
And rang upon my mental ear,

Till I, in sooth, did seem to hear
Her very words in frank reply
To my wish breathing, in a sigh.
I kept her hand, and, unreproved,
A long while held and gently pressed;
I told her not, in words, I loved,
Nor left it wholly to be guessed.
Her eyes so frankly turned to mine,
And there I saw the soul-dew shine
And glitter, almost wholly hid
By silken fringes of the lid.
We felt no need of formal word —
Our hearts unto each other spoke;
Each felt all that we would have heard.

At dinner table side by side
We sat, and very feebly tried
As if we were not quite alone —
With ill success, I well may own —
And all that mellow afternoon
We held our place upon the guard.
The sun descended hours too soon.
My surgeon friend kept watch and ward,
Sole supervision he assumed,
And answered for us everywhere,
And with a hot, remonstrant air;
And so he ordered, scolded, fumed,
And kept intruders quite away.
Thus: "No, they will not sup to-day,
I know; for I just heard them say;
The lady is not very well
And has no present need of food;
'T is fortunate for her she fell

So opportunely to my care;
She must be quiet and alone.
If I find need of any one,
My young assistant here shall share
My duties with me. Madam, those
Two doors behind you I will close."

His words did but precede his acts;
We heard the doors behind us locked —
We felt a very little shocked
At such bold disregard of facts,
And still his kindness, quaint and rude,
Did put us in a merry mood,
And while our hearty laughter grew
We closer, still, together drew.
We felt relieved of prying eyes;
No longer did we dread surprise;
No longer felt the constant need
To hold an ever-present heed
Of every word and tone and look.
We were together, nor could brook
A thought, a hint of parting then.
Love lit her lips and eyes, and when
She, closely to my bosom pressed,
Her glowing cheek did hide and rest,
We were with calm contentment blest.

Had I so quickly drawn away
From all the things of yesterday?
Had she, who in a summer hour,
Drew me with such resistless power,
From my life-ways, so far apart,
So quickly vanished from my heart?

Ah, no! As he who newly mourns
Above a dear and early grave
Most urgently some love must crave,
All humbled and all yearning turns
To any heart, to any face
That wears a sympathetic trace,
And where the broken idol stood
Sets up a formless bit of wood,
And bends, again, adoring knee
As fondly and as reverently
As if the vanished thing divine
Held as of old its wonted shrine;
So I, a perfect faith may prove,
Who, yearning, baffled of my love,
Find love itself a sentient thing;
And self existent and apart
From any mere external spring,
It holds all empire o'er the heart,
Still pliant bending here or there;
Its shrine, its idol everywhere.

The boat was lying at the bank
Whereon a dingy ware-house stood;
Long, lofty rows of corded wood,
And tethered piles of drifted plank
Lay darkly outlined on the shore.
Some horsemen lightly cantered o'er
The open space that stretched before.
Of these I took some curious note
As slowly they approached the boat,
And through my mind a thought did go
Of menace from a present foe,
Which oft dismissed did oft return,

And strong and stronger on me grew,
And as the torch did lower burn
And deeper shadows round it threw,
I presently the silence broke
And my half-formed forebodings spoke:

"What if yon horsemen, riding there,
Were part of some bold raider troop
To silently upon us swoop,
With guns unslung and sabers bare?"

She, starting, turned: "You give the word
To my persistent secret thought;
Some warning cry my heart has heard;
The croak of some ill-omened bird.
Or yet, perchance, I may have caught,
Instinctively, the deeper hue
Of my misgivings, all, from you;
But here 's a courier — by his face
And that tremendous, swinging pace —
And can it be as we suppose?
Sir, Surgeon, are they friends or foes?"

"Foes, may Mars confound our luck!
And captives we. I had not cared
If only we had something dared;
But not a blow could well be struck.
They number five to one, indeed,
And if the captain did not plead,
Resistance would insure his ship
Destruction on her thousandth trip.
And then you ladies! When he spoke
Of you, our resolution broke;

And thus we are compelled to yield
What might have been a pretty field;
But we may have one ground of boast,
Small solace though it be, at most;
Our captor's name 's in every mouth —
The boldest raider of the South;
I knew him in the days agone.
I think I shall presume upon
My old acquaintance to bespeak
Such quick release as we may seek."
And wheeling rapidly about,
My friend went hotly striding out.
And then I said: "There yet may be
Some moments left to you and me;
It may be left for you to say
If you will take your onward way,
Or with my darker fortunes go
To some far camp-ground of the foe."

"I should be instantly resolved
If I could be so quickly told
Upon which horn my lover bold
Of this dilemma is involved.
With him permitted to remain
In easy keeping of his room,
My course appears to be quite plain;
I will accept whatever doom
Goes with this grim, gray cavalcade,
The unknown fortunes of the raid."

She paused a moment and did bring
Her inmost soul unto my eye,
And then as in a sweet reply

To my heart's silent questioning,
She said: "I leave it all to you;
Command me what you will to do."

There was no prouder triumph for
The lordliest Roman conqueror,
Than he in exultation leads
Who suddenly, no longer pleads
With some proud woman — but commands;
And takes her fate into his hands.

But now the hurry of the rout
Gave little time for other thought.
We were so swiftly whirled about
That memory too faintly caught
Those smaller incidents that make
The perfect woven web of tale —
The breezy, buoyant, filling sail,
That ever took, and still must take
The story-teller, new or old,
Safe into port of tale well told. —

I do remember how the Aunt,
The officer of guard did haunt
Until her trunks were safely stowed,
Within an ample ambulance
So far, the battle's favoring chance
Had sent unused along the road.

And how I scarce repressed the laugh
That merrily assailed my lip,
To see our railroad monarch slip
Through carriage door too small by half,
Where sprawling on the floor he lay
While we did mount and ride away.

And though I laughed, still, at the best
I was the more and more impressed
With this slight incident, that still,
Absurdly showed his iron will,
And too, Annita, moodily
Leant from her trooper saddle-tree
And said: "Not even that large fear,
That grows so high on what we hear,
Can turn my heavy wooer back
From his premeditated track.
May Fate or Mars be my swift friend,
And from some cloudy ambush send
A fierce cyclone of battle wrath
Across our unsuspecting path!
I could accept some sudden doom
That did engulf him in its gloom."

Scarce had she spoken, when a light
Shot up among the tree-tops, far,
And quickly grew so broad and bright,
I cried: "Behold! the God of war,
In answer to your heartful cry,
Flings his red banner down the sky!"

But soon the bending road displayed
The flames where broken wagons blazed;
A fire that threw its vivid sheen
Upon the forest's leafy screen,
Which shadowed on this wall of night
Brief pictures of the raider's flight,
Swift, silent, flitting on their way
Like bats across a disc of day.

This episode so wild and strange,
The first to show me chance and change
That wait on war's uncertain way,
Restrained us silent, till the day,
The foliage faintly gleaming through,
Revealed a river, broad and blue,
That ran in many rocky rills,
With fainting roar 'round little hills
Of ragged pebbles, drifted sand;
Nor on the shore we long did stand;
But thundering through the shallow ford
A long, white line of wagons poured,
And following after we did dash,
With many a foamy plunge and plash;
Now o'er a hidden, stony ledge,
Now through some deeper channeled pool
That lay inviting, clear and cool,
Until we reached the farther edge.
And there our jaded steeds were hitched,
And saddles thrown upon the ground,
And fires were kindled, tents were pitched,
And through the trees arose a sound —
The multitudinous voice of camp:
The deep and hollow thundering tramp
Of many iron-shodden feet,
Which struck the earth with frequent beat;
The shrill, reverberating neigh
Of steeds that each to each did call;
And lower, massier than all,
The drone of human tongues where lay
The raider troop throughout the day.
One of our captors I did note

When first the steep and slippery plank
Gave us scant footing from the boat
Unto the dim and shadowy bank.
He walked before, and lent his hand,
And, when upon our viewless way,
Of us he seemed to have command.
Few were the words we heard him say,
And they directed to our guard,
Who kept no jealous watch or ward,
But held a steady, jogging trot,
And rode as if they saw us not.

And yet another I did see,
Who rode beyond and at his side,
And watched Annita furtively;
And in low mutterings replied,
With bended and averted head,
To many words the former said.
He was a tall and shapely lad,
Who wore a wealth of flowing hair
Back gathered from his forehead fair.
This chivalric old fashion had
In him its very best defense,
And gave to him a brave pretense
To that antique and knightly air
Our later day so ill can spare.

But when the daylight softly came,
And up the east its rosy cone
Began to set the sky aflame,
Our dashing cavalier was gone.

And when our keeper pitched his tent
And gave it solely to our use,

My lips, in grateful thanks profuse,
In vain some bootless questions spent.
"The lad who did so fairly ride
Throughout the night-march, at your side,
Since day began we've seen no more."

A keen, half-scowling look he wore
I deemed that I had seen before,
Then said: "My younger brother bore
Dispatches — where, I do not know;
Nor if he come, or farther go.
Your friends will shortly join you here!
You 'll find your sentries not severe!
Some yards you may unchallenged walk,
And just within the widened ring,
Where now you see them slowly stalk,
There is a sweet and limpid spring
Does from the shaded hillside burst —
There you may go to quench your thirst.
My cook our breakfast will prepare,
Of which I beg that you will share,
And then throughout the heated day
Amuse yourselves as best you may.
Some months ago we could afford
A sheltering roof and ample board;
But now, yon chimneys lone and black
Remain to mark your army's track;
Full many a deep and hideous scar
Fair Alabama owes to war."

He waved a courtly, short adieu,
And then upon my face he threw
A keen, half-scowling, curious look,

That in my recollection took
A thousand aspects — yet in each
But ill solution could I reach.
He made as if some sudden speech
And angry, too, he did intend;
But on Annita, at my side,
His glance an instant he did bend,
Compressed his lips, and turned to wend
His way with long and rapid stride.

"Sir Doleful! I am half afraid;
Saw you the look our jailer gave?
Whilst yet he very plainly thought
You heeded, or you saw him not?
He seemed to me a churlish knave."
My fair companion lightly said:
"He had the very self-same glower
That Richard's jailer-minions bent
Upon the children in the tower!
We shall be smothered in our tent;
Unless that fair and shapely youth
Who rode beside us in the night,
And left us with the morning light,
Should, in his gentleness and ruth,
Uplift his small and slender hand,
And interpose his single brand.
But, even were there naught to fear,
I would to heaven that he were here!"

"The very echo of my wish,"
I ventured, while the faintest pang
Of jealousy within me sprang.
"'Twas but a seasoning, for your dish

Of half-done terrors, flat and sad;
That look was strange; and yet, not bad;
It meant to pierce me to the core.
Have I the giver met before?
Deliberately I answer, 'No!'
Yet there is something in the eye,
The lip, the rounded, bearded chin,
That startled me, I know not why;
And all along our ride, did throw
Some threads of speculation in
The web of this strange night's events.
No explanation half contents
My reason, but doth serve to press
Me deeper in the wilderness.
And he who woke your last regret,
Is in my thought as deeply set.
He is, I say, in very truth,
A pretty and mysterious youth,
Who does attract and haunt me so
That him at once I yearn to know."

I saw a look, a teasing smile
Curve, quizzingly along her lip;
It lingered there a little while,
To softly, gently outward slip
As if a hiding place to seek
Among the dimples of the cheek;
The corners of her mouth did droop,
Her brows did, lowering, bend and stoop.
And following her moody glance
I saw the fateful ambulance,
But now delivered from the deep
And rumbling up the rocky steep.

CANTO IX.

The hot and sultry autumn day
Had flown, we knew not how, away;
We had recounted, o'er and o'er,
The individual incidents
That, haply, unto each befell,
And with the humorous comments
And hotly spiced retort, as well,
And each occurrence fairly wore
Such color, either gay or grave,
As each imagination gave.
The Aunt, with greatest fervor, told
How she and her brave German maid,
Beset with foes, were not afraid
Successfully to plead and scold
Until, her baggage from the wreck
Was brought upon the lower deck
And in the ambulance bestowed,
Before she deigned to take the road.
And how her escort, Mr. Pierce,
Of the great firm of Pierce & King,
Had looked exceeding bold and fierce,
And did a high defiance fling
At every "reb" who dared to ride
Too near the cumbrous carriage side.

And once she had a dreadful shock —
'T was when an hour they had stopped;
The door was opened without knock,
And two men, carrying a third,
Almost within their burden dropped,

But drew him back when they had heard
Her wild, expostulatory scream.
The wounded man did even deem
It proper to apologize,
In deference to her surprise!

Annita said, with flashing eyes:
"Suppose that wounded soldier dies!
Would such a trifling sacrifice
Of feelings and of comfort be
Too much for even you or me?"

"A soldier's sister surely is—
At all events, she ought to be—
The very last I could suspect
Of treating wounded friend or foe
With cruelty or mere neglect."

Her face lit with a lofty glow,
Revealed a nature strong and kind—
The woman with a heart and mind.
I seized and warmly pressed her hand,
And while we there did silent stand
I saw the objects of her thrust
Perceptibly withdraw, and shrink;
As they who on a sudden brink
Discover instantly they must
Their very heedless steps recall
Or brave the terrors of a fall;
But now my skillful surgeon friend
Without premeditation found
For threatened conflict, peaceful end:
"How did your trooper get his wound?"

"I do not know. We did not hear;
And yet, was there not something said
Of courier swiftly sent ahead
For reinforcements for the rear?"
"And did you hear no sound of fight?"

"Oh! not at all. There was a light,
Faint snapping, as of popping corn,
We heard it when upon the road,
We passed, an hour before the morn,
The burning wagons and their load.
I recollect, we both had said
That faint, persistent, crackling noise
We thought the burning bacon made,
Was much like that our little boys
Make with fire-crackers and parade
Of flying flags and drums in play
Of battle, Independence Day.

"Ah! it was then as I did fear
A heavy skirmish in the rear,
Of which our fellows got the worst;
Or these hard raiders would not stay
Here by the river all the day.
I might have known it, from the first!"
The veteran surgeon muttered low:
"It were as well, perhaps, to know,
We may be favored any hour
With leaden, or an iron shower.
The missiles, guns and cannon send,
Distinguish not twixt foe and friend,
And we may see yon farther bank
Soon bristling with the foremost rank

Of our determined boys in blue.
We must arrange what best to do
To save ourselves in such event.
The ridge just there beyond the tent
Descends abruptly from the crest;
'Twill make an earthwork, not the best;
I have a glass and I will watch,
And the first sign of fight I catch,
A signal handkerchief will wave
In sudden warning of alarm.
At best you 'll have brief time to save
Yourselves from any threatened harm."

And so the surgeon took his stand
At foot of hill, beside the spring,
And purely, deftly, out of hand,
Took with him Pierce, of Pierce & King.
Our silent, hearty merriment
Commemorated this event.

But still a thought of seriousness
Our lighter feelings did repress;
We fell into a watchfulness
Of all the sights and sounds of camp:
We heard the unremitting stamp
Of horses striking at the flies;
We saw thin streaks of smoke arise;
We saw where sentries turned and strode;
We saw the blue cross, starred and barred;
We saw hot couriers beat the road
With blows of hoof-strokes quick and hard;
And now a numerous picket guard,
Released awhile from watch and ward,

Around the bubbling fountain rush —
Here is, indeed, an endless crush,
And many downward stoop and drink,
And many o'er these eager lean
And deftly fill the tin canteen,
That does so slowly fill and sink;
And here some jetty, jolly slave
Who, from his whitewashed cabin far,
Came with his master to the war,
Went singing a melodious stave,
Full of wild, mellow, gurgling sound,
Like water running underground,
Sweet as the far-famed Switzer's call
That from his rugged Alpine wall
On distant ear doth softly fall;

And there before a row of tents,
With laughter loud and sharp comments,
Long, crowding lines of gazers stood,
With craning, eager necks, to watch
The oft-contended running-match;
Or brawny wrestlers strove, who could
With strength and courage well have filled,
In critic days of ancient Rome,
The Coliseum to its dome: —
As that dome was the dome of blue,
I think this statement large, don't you? —
In those wild matches fierce and skilled
Were men whose strength to do and dare
With gladiators might compare.

And here the merry violin
Played with a strange, continuous bow

That Scotia's fiddlers only know;
And those migrating sons of hers
Who peopled these wild mountain spurs,
And left, wherever they had been,
Inheritance of skill to play,
And love of perilous foray,
Which mark these mountain men to-day.
The sparkling floods of music's flow—
A steady, roaring, rippling stream—
Brought black, contending dancers in
With shining eyes and teeth agleam,
And loud applauding laugh and shout
From crowding watchers, ranged about.

And close, a-group beneath yon trees
Upon the grass and at their ease,
Their eager eyes all downward bent
Upon some game at cards intent.
Before them lay an ample heap
Of paper-money, new and cheap;
Nor heeded they who went or came,
So fascinating was the game.
We saw the reckless players toss
The well-worn cards, for gain or loss,
With such grim humor as they feel
Mid crash of shot and clang of steel.

And, leaning on the shading tree
I saw, or fancied I did see
A slender figure, lithe and trim,
With yellow locks that fell below
The shapely shoulders in a flow;
A golden filigree, a rim

Of soft and wavy yellow light:
The horseman we had seen that night.
With pointing hand I said: "Look there!
Your knightly raider, tall and fair,
Or else my eyes are worthless grown."

"And mine as skill-less as your own,"
She answered in an earnest tone,
"He seems to me to stand apart,
As one who wears within his heart
Some sweet remembrance of a love
That, like the ever constant dove,
Whatever journey forced to make,
Back to its home will instant take
As swift and straight as arrow flights
Till fluttering downward it alights,
In ecstasies of home and love
That rise all other joys above."

She turned on me her liquid eyes
Of that delicious, kindly brown
And softer than the eider-down;
I felt within my heart arise,
A choking, angry sense of grief,
That did oppress beyond belief;—
A grief that had a darker tinge,
Which hung upon it as a fringe;
Resentment driving me to deal
A sudden wound; a cruel blow,
That might a mangled soul reveal,
Or cause a heart's warm blood to flow,
As with a frown more dark than night,
I spoke, in blind, unreasoning spite:

"There lives no woman on the earth,
No matter how divinely wrought,
Who can deserve a serious thought!
There is no constancy, no worth
In all the fair and fickle race!
Love is with them a smile, a song
That ever equally belong
To every new and handsome face;
I leave you, now, that you may send
Some message to this newer friend."

She was so stricken with surprise,
And, too, with just a dash of fear,
At sight of me in such new guise,
And my harsh words that she did hear,
And all my wrathful countenance,
That did repel her yearning glance,
She sat an instant still, and mute,
And shamed, confused, irresolute;
But, still, as I did move away,
She seized my hands; implored me stay—
With what warm words I do not know;
Her dripping tears, her cheek aglow;
Her broken sobs that fed her tears.—
Ah! who has reached to manhood's years
With heart so hard as can resist
The spirit's oxydizing mist?
And I, at last quite mollified,
Sat there and clasped her to my side;
And then we wholly did forget,
In this strange, new experience,
The common courses of events,

And watchful eyes about us set,
Until some careless, aimless look
Showed me the youth she termed her knight,
Drawn to his very tallest height,
With whitened lip and hand that shook,
And eyes that flashed and flared and burned
In flaming anger, till he turned,
And in blind, wrathful passion strode,
Unheedful of the rugged road,
As if he tore himself away
Ere words his anger might betray.
I, sneering, said: "Beyond a doubt,
Your pretty, fair-haired chevalier
Has, covertly, espied us here
And hotly run away to pout."

She blushed and looked along the path
Where, stumbling on, the stranger went
In sightless fury of a wrath
That seemed as if his soul it rent.
And then she murmured: "Who 'd believe
That I should now so little grieve
That such a spectacle I make,
And openly, for dear love's sake?
See where he stops beside the spring
And hails our special picket guard,
And backward looks does wildly fling,
That now I think most surely had
Some look of — well, of hopeless, mad;
And Mr. Pierce doth grimly stare
As at some specter of the air.
Of these three lovers, two conspire

Against the third a vengeance dire,
And still that third is safe from harm
Within protection of my arm."

She smiled mischievously, and I
Laughed back an all-amused reply;
What if I then had thought or known—
But let me leave this thought alone!
For then—well, then, the supper bell
Rang out its not unwelcome call,
That kindly broke the eerie spell
That held us in its drowsy thrall;
But ere we turned away we took
A backward, half-regretful look
At that all restful, grassy bank
Where yet our lounging imprints sank.
"We have been very happy there,"
She said, with tender, dreamy air.
"There, too, I have been very sad,"
I answered, in a bantering tone.
"And in your sadness not alone;
But, then, did I not make you glad?"

And then I noticed how the aunt,
Against each prudent, careful rule
Duenna taught, or boarding-school,
Did so neglect our grassy haunt,
Between the chestnut trees that spread
Their burry branches overhead.
I turned and turned this thought about,
And deftly sought the motive out,
And thus observed with what a smile
She did her niece's suitor greet;

And how with many a luring wile
She drew him to the nearest seat,
And skillfully her knife she plied,
And figuratively, as well;
The iron pierced, from side to side,
His soul, with every stroke that fell;
Thus: "Dear Annita, one would think
You and the Captain, there, had grown
Fast rooted to yon grassy brink,
Like olden lovers turned to stone
By some magician's spiteful spell;
Some charming tale you each did tell,
That did arouse a prudent fear
Your words might reach some other ear,
Else why was each to each so near?"

I saw the swift and angry flush
That o'er Annita's neck and cheek
In high, resentful tide did rush;
But ere she could have time to speak,
I softly pressed her tapping foot
Significantly with my boot,
And turned on her a meaning look
I know she could not misconstrue.
She paused, a little, and her cue
From my half-laughing features took;
And thus, we, smiling waited there:
"Beyond a doubt, a happy pair!"
Thus fiercely muttered Pierce & King,
While high our merriment did ring,
As at some very mirthful jest,
One of our Surgeon's very best;

A jest that we prolonged to do
For laughter, all the supper through.

And just before the night did fall,
We heard the ringing bugle-call
That through the wooded valley went
To bring each trooper from his tent.
Soon through dependent canvas doors,
A stream of arming soldiers pours;
Until two long and bristling lines
Slant faintly off among the pines.

"See there!" (the Surgeon raised his hand,)
"Where yonder watching horsemen stand,
The one who nearest sits, this way,
Dressed in a darker suit of gray,
He is a very God of fight!
A fearless raider of the night.
From all war tactics he cut loose;
Invented a tremendous arm
Which no one kens so well to use
With such a dire effect of harm.
His men, you see, no sabers wear,
Obtrusive weapons seldom felt;
But fine repeating rifles bear,
And Colts' revolvers in each belt.
See how, on foot, they march and wheel
As infantry in battle line!
Ha! that maneuver was most fine!
See how aloft that hedge of steel
Could crush a line of horse, indeed!
I saw them form for fight, one day,
Four left their saddles, marched away;

The fifth man sat upon his steed,
And held each lengthened bridle-rein,
And, to the bugle paying heed,
Rode here and there, or back again,
Wherever there did seem a need
To quick avoid a crushing blow
From sudden, vast superior force,
Or rush upon a flying foe
Along his all-precarious course.
No warrior brain conceived, before,
A mounted, flying rifle corps.
What chief of cavalry shall dare
This innovation to ignore
In any future war, shall share
Such dire disasters as engage
The men who lag behind their age.
I know him — knew him long and well,
Before this brothers' war befell;
I recollect — or did I tell
About that game of cards we beat — ''

''O, yes!'' growled Pierce; ''you did n't eat
A bite for two whole days or more!
You 've told it fifty times before
This day, I 'll take my solemn oath.
I 'll wager I can beat you both!''
This spiteful answer did provoke
A storm of laughter. Then the cloak
Of night fell over us; but soon
The eastern sky displayed the moon,
And from the shadows of the hills
Sang scores of mournful whip-poor-wills,

And all the moonlit earth along
Rolled up a growing wave of song
Until its tuneful billows reached
The higher ground where we lay beached,
And breaking on our spirits rang.
Impulsively we stood and sang
All-plaintive love-songs, merry glees,
Till branches of the list'ning trees
Vibrated with our melodies.
We made a not uncouth quartet:
I sang the tenor with some grace,
And Pierce, despite his stolid face,
Did roar a deep and mellow base;
The Surgeon did a little fret
With over-zealousness the time;
Besides, he spoilt the final rhyme
By prematurely striking in
Ere, in the measure's usual course,
We were quite ready to begin.
But soon he bawled himself so hoarse
That silence held his tongue, perforce.

And then before us, cap in hand,
A suave "black boy" did, bowing, stand,
And from a pocket of his coat
Produced a roughly-penciled note:
"The General, with his compliments,
Would gladly see you at his tents.
Those who so sweetly are in tune
Will grant a music-lover's boon.
Please come! The boy will lead the way."
Signed "N. B. F. of C. S. A."

An hundred exclamations flew;
The Surgeon boldly said he knew
To whom this favor must be due.
Pierce sneeringly, "Of course, to you!"
The Aunt desired to go in state;
And earnestly for time did press
In which to change for evening dress;
Annita would not, could not wait,
But took my arm within her own
And pressing it against her heart
We hurried gaily off, alone.
The watchful Pierce did quickly start,
And thus we all began to walk,
Too full of wonderment to talk.

Through straggling groups of tents we came
Upon a more pretentious light—
A great pine torch, whose yellow flame
Threw back the moon's white softer light.
A stalwart soldier, dark and tall,
Within a careless group was set.
He rose: "I'm glad I caught you all
With that one haul of my good net.
I have you here within my power
And must compel you for an hour—
You know, birds that *can* sing but *won't*—
No need to quite complete the saw.
Why Doctor! can it be, I don't
Mistake my opponent at 'draw'?
Our southern sun has made you brown;
But still I know the man for you,
Although your uniform of blue

Makes all you Yankees look the same.
You recollect our two days' game?
Now don't put on a pious frown;
The ladies gracefully excuse
The man who can so coolly loose."

And then with many winks and nods,
Sly laugh, and hint about the odds,
The two stood smiling, hand in hand,
As brothers of some secret band.
Who, seeing them, could then suppose
To-morrow they'd be deadly foes?

And then they begged us for a song.
We sang and sang until the night
Had worn itself so far along,
We knew not if the outer light
Were of the moon, or break of day;
And when we rose, our host did say:

"For all this kindness done to me
I would that I could send you forth
Without restraint, and wholly free
To meet your kindred of the North.
My force is barely strong enough
To meet your riders bold and rough,
And so I can not spare a guard
To take you safely to your friends.
Such incidents of war are hard,
And I can only make amends
By keeping you a little while,
Within protection of our hands;
And now I see you shrewdly smile;

But there are many roving bands
Of cut-throats who would realize
Upon you as a brilliant prize;
And very speedily, I fear,
Were I to simply leave you here.
Good night; and may the angels keep
Some heavenly sort of sentry beat
About your piney-roofed retreat
What slender hours you have for sleep."
And then he took his gracious stand
Beside his tent's uplifted door,
Shook and reshook each proffered hand,
Called after us again, spake o'er
Some badinage of gay good-night,
Till we were almost out of sight.

I said, as we walked slowly back
Along the moonlit homeward track:
"An oddly striking element
In all the problems of our war,
I saw within our captor's tent,
And not what I was looking for.
It was of such obtrusive kind
As forced itself upon my mind:
In each opposing regiment,
In each adversely drawn brigade,
Are leaders who were former friends;
Who knew each other more than well,
And had each other often weighed,
And thus could accurately tell
Their methods, powers, means and ends,
And so can shrewdly calculate

The present and the future fate
Of any given enterprise
That falls before their knowing eyes;
And this must, surely, strongly tend
To bring it to some fairer end,
Without the long revenge and hate
On internecine wars that wait."

And, after this, we reached the tent;
The General's order had withdrawn
Our sentinels, and they were gone;
Reluctantly the others went
Within, while we remained outside;
Just ling'ring, as the silence grew,
To say, unseen, a sweet adieu;
Again, and yet again we tried,
And each from each would break away;
A word, a look would each recall;
We sat us down as if to stay.
And so the numbing power of sleep
Did, quite unwarned, upon me fall.
I sank into a slumber, deep,
That instantly upon me stole,
As there against the chestnut's bole
Clasped in her arms I so reclined,
How long I know not; but the wind
Aroused me from this sweetest rest,
My head upon her gentle breast.
A sense of terror, me oppressed
As of some suffocating dream,
Or maybe some half-uttered scream,
With which Annita filled the air;

Awaked, I saw it standing there,
A shadowy, threatening figure tall
Against the dim tents whiter wall.
I could not utter any word;
All goblin tales that I had heard
Their presence in my memory stirred —
All secret warfare mind must wage
Against its superstitious dread;
Revisitations from the dead,
So much believed in every age,
Since Witch of Endor saw King Saul
Shake underneath his thick disguise
When the dead Prophet did arise,
In awful threatening form and tall,
And stretched his warning, spectral hand
At bidding of the magic wand.—
Ha! these mysterious men are right!
I doubt no longer from to-night!
We looked into each other's eyes
And saw our dreadful thoughts the same;
Still, terror held one more surprise:
The glance from each to each did fly
Was but the twinkling of an eye,
Yet in that very briefest space,
As fog an instant wind may chase,
The specter vanished as it came,
Or, as we both did after say,
It seemed to thin and melt away.

We sat in silence not for long;
We seemed to feel upon us throng
The needs of human speech and touch,

And human presences as much.
I took Annita to her tent,
But scarcely said good night, and went
To rest upon a friendly board,
While Pierce within our dog-tent snored.

The breakfast proved a hasty meal
We did in total silence make,
Before the day could fairly break.
A stiff constraint we seemed to feel;
Till in the morning's rosy blush
We noted an unwonted rush
Among the wagons in the road.
So many had begun to load!
This marching city, quickly reared,
As if by magic, disappeared.

And here a mounted orderly
Came galloping up to our tent;
I hurried where he speaking leant
And asked him what the movement meant;
He finished speaking, turned to me,
And briefly said: "I do not know;
But just a little while ago
A courier ran in here, afoot.
He'd run his horse till he could put
No longer either foot or leg
Before another — not a peg —
And so he left him in his track,
A mile along the road, and back.
Our breakfast, which was just begun,
Indeed, was very shortly done.
I heard, just now, the Captain say

The rear will be your guard to-day.
These ladies may as well prepare
For one long, hot and rapid ride,
Unless they choose somewhere to hide —
I think the guard would hardly care;
But we would scarcely wish to part
With ladies fair and bright as these; —
That coffee, madam, wins my heart!
I would do anything to please
The giver of so sweet a cup —
To your bright eyes I turn it up;
Another? This is wanton waste;
I had forgot the very taste!"

I stood impatiently, and heard
The fellow's bold impertinence,
That somehow irritating stirred
A sense of more than slight offense,
That must have been — could only be —
A twinge of hateful jealousy.
I smile in self-contemptuous scorn
At reminiscences like this;
I wonder if a mortal is,
Or ever was, or will be born
To live a life of placid love
All jealous doubts and fears above?

And when he raised his hat to bow,
And gaily turned his horse's head,
I sneered again, and wondered how
A cultured woman could be led —
Indeed, I think I sharply said
Some harsh and bitter things that bred

A coolness for a little while ;
It lasted half an hour — or mile.

For now our horses, five by count,
And, too, an elephantine mule —
For Mr. Pierce this special mount.
Like usher to a riding school,
Pierce, in a most unwonted burst
Of anger, sat his saddle first,
Nor did on us an instant wait,
But trotted nimbly down the ridge —
The Surgeon said, to try his gait ; —
But paused beyond a little bridge
And tarried there till we came on.

When we 'd a little distance gone,
Annita spoke with earnest tone
And brown eyes peeping in my own :
" What you may think I can not tell,
Of what last night somehow occurred.
Could I recall each act and word,
And each perverser thought, as well,
And have each circumstance the same,
I would not do it for my name ;
But still, I fear when her you meet —
O, promise me the sudden heat
Of restoration shall not bind
You unto her, as once it bound ;
Or if on seeing her you find
Your love for me has second place,
Act not, but wait a little space.
I think with bitter, cruel pang
How some have stormily accused

My love, that out of friendship sprang;
My word, my pledge I had abused;
And, too, I think that you despise
My love, my blind devotedness.
Your lip a-curl, your lowering eyes,
Leave me but little need to press.
But yesterday! O, yesterday!
You were not thus; you were so kind
That day shall linger in my mind—
That sweetest day of all.—Alas!
That such a day must flit away!
That such sweet days so quickly pass!"

Her face, her pretty face, so sad!
Her brown eyes turned away from me,
And widely opening as they had
Some sweet, regretful reverie,
That underneath her lifted lid,
In mournful shadows, partly hid:
A look that I have never seen,
A look that I may never see.
But deep compassion in my mien
In every word and look will be.
The pitying, tender heart of youth
Throbs on forever in my breast,
A tenderness that will not rest,
A tenderness that steeps in tears
Sad episodes of trusting truth,
The daily stories of our years.
I said: "Forgive me, if you can;
And well I know you can forgive—
No gentler heart than yours can live.

I fear that I am but a man:
I fear that you have drawn me there,
In your too dear imaginings,
As more than mortal good and fair,
And having, from my very birth,
A pair of most angelic wings,"
I lightly said, to win her smile,
For sorrow locks a step with mirth;
The angels of our common earth
Live here, O, such a little while!

She turned on me a beaming glance;
A look that still doth hold its charm
Through all vicissitudes of chance.
She pressed her hand upon my arm,
And said: "Whatever you may be;
Whatever good; whatever harm;
Whatever cruel scars or stains
May seam and blotch your fairer soul,
They are of earth, the earthly chains
That fetter you to earth and me;
The slender fetters that control
The yearnings of a spirit bright
That else had early winged its flight
Back to some all-too-distant skies
For one, nay two, pairs mortal eyes,
Two pairs — one brown, the other blue —
Both fixed eternally on you."

A gentle sorrow in her tone;
Her eyes behind a mist of tears
Then kindly, generously shone,
And still so shine in all the years.

Much more than this to say we sought,
But Pierce somehow divined our thought,
And so his greater speed did slack
Until he dropped completely back,
So near to us our faintest word
That might, above the sounding beat
Of many hundred horses' feet,
Be heard by us, by *him* was heard.

And so in lieu of words, we took
The language of the tender look;
And even this so soon was merged
In that increasing, living tide
That all about us roared and surged
As still we did more fairly ride;
Until the ever growing pace
Grew swiftly to a mighty chase,
A vast and undetermined race.

And I did scan each passing face;
But all day long, my keen regard
Did bring me nothing of reward
Until at one clear, mellow creek
We paused to water, man and beast,
Where stood a cabin, gray and bleak
Beside the road, and, farther east;
And here, too weak to move away
Some dozen wounded soldiers lay,
Their dingy uniforms of blue,
By time and weather, travel-stained,
Unlike the gaudy dress that drew
Admiring eyes, which, fresh and new,
An element of war explained;

A problem, rather, that contained
Some harsh and bitter food for thought
Of war, my second lesson taught.

"A very pretty picket-fight,"
A grim, rough-bearded trooper said;
"Some of your fellows over night
Had camped, were hardly out of bed—
Some hours ago it was, and when
Yon young lieutenant and his men
Went down at such a gallant dash!—
Short work they made, and bold and rash.
Your men I think, from Michigan,
Good men they were; and not a man
But met his death or met a wound.
And these we after sought and found,
And gathered in for shelter there.
This house of logs, though hard and bare,
Will shield them from the rain or sun;
This is as much as may be done."

"And is there no one to attend
These wounded comrades lying where
Will be no hint of help or care?
And after we our way shall wend,
And quickly, all too quickly fly,
In cold neglect beyond and by!"
Almost instinctively, I cried.

My chief decisively replied:
"You will with these fair ladies ride
This tedious journey to beguile
And Pierce and I will pause awhile,

All needed operations make,
Then push our steeds, to overtake."

I bowed as one who understands
And willingly obeys commands;
Pierce looked in my impassive face
And yielded with the illest grace.
The guards approvingly looked on,
And back, long after we were gone.

I said: "Yon young lieutenant, slight,
The hero of the picket-fight,
Look closely, tell me if you know?"

"I know — I have no need to guess."
Her lips did angrily compress;
Her face an instant flushed and paled,
She quivered like an autumn leaf;
I felt she hid an age of grief;
I knew how little grief availed.

All gentle measures then I took
To court and to return *her* look;
Where, all unreined, her jaded horse
Bent down his head to crop the grass,
I saw her, as we there did pass,
I saw her, and a black remorse
Somehow upon my bosom flung
Its wreath of ivy and of rue,
And there forever they have clung.
I saw her grief-ringed eye of blue,
I saw them wide and ringed with white;
I saw that baleful shimmering light
That blazed the intervening air,

As I had seen that summer night
Upon the Wabash, lone and dark,
Like eyes of tigers in a lair;
The rifle in her hand I mark,
And see her griping fingers clutch
And move it with an angry touch;
And for an instant I have fear
Of sharp and ringing rifle-crack—
I dread and I expect to hear
The hissing bullet at my back;
And yet, reflecting, I confess
There was, pervading all her air
Of hot, unreasoning anger, less
Than irretrievable despair.

And this may be an afterthought;
The long-remember'd vision's phase
That comes to me in after-days,
And so into my brain is wrought.

And O! and O! if I had known
What little later on I knew,
Perhaps the somber wreath of rue
Had not upon my bosom grown.
But now the torrent of the horse
Bore us impetuously on;
A narrow, winding mountain-course
That here did slowly creep upon
Some towering ridge's wooded height,
And there did rush in headlong flight
Along some valley's narrow gash,
Until the sinking sun a-flash
One minute from a moutain rim

Of gold-fringed woodland, blue and dim,
In seeming paused and then flamed down,
As if at toppling pinnacle
It clutched a moment ere it fell
To nether space remote and brown.

Then at a narrow, sluggish creek
Which autumn leaves had darkly stained,
A restful hour we did seek.
Nor longer time we there remained
Than merely did suffice to feed
The hungry trooper and his steed;
And at the startling bugle-call
Each into place did quickly fall,
And through a long and weary night
We held us swiftly on our way;
The moon shot down the needed light
That served us fairly till the day.
When, as the sun climbed up the sky,
We did our horses sorely try
With short swift gallop, sudden halt,
That proved our leading all at fault;
And in a little, restive pause
I asked an officer the cause.

"A little farther you will see
A corps of marching infantry,
That here completely block the road
And have our rapid progress slowed;
And will, till we can pass their rear.
They're General Longstreet's men, I hear."

I felt a curious eagerness,
I strove all vainly to repress.
And should I then so soon behold
This foam of every battle-wave,
That did with crimson carnage lave
Those fields all hist'ry shall enfold
With all the somber splendor, fame
Lights with the lurid battle-flame?

And thinking thus, I saw where sank
A slender youth who paused to rest
A moment on a grassy bank,
While past a marching column poured.
His face was delicately brown
And on his upper lip, the down
Of dawning manhood faintly gave
A serious shadowing and grave,
That rested on his somber face
And lent to it a nameless grace.
He held across his resting knees
One of those wondrous rifles, new,
That change all wonted distances
At which the ancient musket slew,
And make the modern deadly fight
With either foemen out of sight.

He carried, too, a wounded hand,
Enwound in bandage, slung in band,
And holding up a tin canteen,
That dripping from a spring had been.
"This is, I think," the Sergeant said,
"A part of Pickett's famed brigade,
And that young fellow sitting there

Upon that mound with grass o'ergrown
Has seen the blaze of battle glare
Once for each year his life has known —
A score of battles — score of years —
One of our Southern chevaliers!
A half-healed wound can not be brought,
With all the anguish it can yield,
To keep him from a bloody field
When fateful battle must be fought."

My soldier, with some flourish, made
This harmless bit of Gasconade,
But this light boasting rant of speech
My clear perception did not reach.
I queried then, on truth intent,
"Is battle then so imminent?"

But ere he ventured to reply
A sudden deep and booming sound
Struck once the sky, the air, the ground,
But rolled along and down the sky,
As if a bolt of thunder bowed
And sprang without impelling cloud,
Save that which darkly lowers now
Towards the distant north and west —
A cloud that shades the southern brow
Of Lookout Mountain's towering crest.
There! there! it booms! resounding far,
A Titan's angry shout of war.

And now the marching columns stop,
And weary men beside the road
Among the leaves and grasses drop.

Each lays aside his martial load,
And looking northward through the trees
A faint, occasional glitter sees.

Intently looking, too, I see
A figure striding leisurely.
An intervening bush may hide
This solitary man from me
A moment, then he steps aside,
Then onward moves with steady stride.
One, said I? There are two and three!
And each succeeding side-step makes
Room that some following figure takes.

And now a sudden gleam of shine,
A swift and momentary glint
From farthest left to farthest right
Falls, here and there, upon the sight.
In flame-like ripples faint and fine,
That only dimly, vaguely hint,
In careless unconcern, at first,
The thought of battle soon to burst
In all its fascinating strength;
As often placid, simple themes
Become vast horrors in our dreams.
A line of ever growing length
Which e'en the far horizon crossed,
And there beyond its edge was lost;
A fluttered banner, brightly red,
That crimson scintillations shed,
And suddenly where they had been,
There stood impassively the screen
Of brown and yellow leaves and green;

Such are the signs that first define
The vast, swift-moving battle-line.

I hear some rapid horse's feet
And turn my own in time to greet
Our kindly host of yester-night.
He lacks to-day the warmly bright
And even merry look he wore
When that strange night of song was o'er.

He said: "I'm happy to have found
You, who by this time, are aware
This soon may be contested ground;
But how my lady guests may fare,
Gives me an added load of care."

He pointed northward as he spoke
To where a thin gray cloud of smoke,
Spread slowly up into the air.
"I think you'll find your friends are there!
Go back a mile upon your track
And take a northward trending lane;
Go speedily, and turn not back!
All salt will find its savor vain,
For who rides south to-day in blue;
But for your lady friends and you
Whoe'er you meet in dusty gray
Right cheerfully will give you way."

He handed me a folded scrap
Of paper, grimed with marching dust,
Which I into my pocket thrust,
To keep it from a chance mishap;
And turned to say our kind good-bye,

But only saw his sable plumes
Among the pine trees' greener glooms,
For one brief moment, fluttering fly.
And to Annita then I turned:
"These three days lessons we have learned
Of wonderful, enduring speed,
For one more half-day, we must heed."

And then with rare, infrequent words,
Like covey of thrice-frightened birds,
Our rapid westward flight did bring
Us where we turned a northward wing,
And on and onward while we flew
The noise of booming cannon grew.

We passed a clear and winding creek
Below a mill so gray and bleak,
Where, from an upper window-stick,
There limply hung a yellow flag—
The saffron-colored, jaundiced tag
That marked the bivouac of the sick.
I said in low and musing breath:
"Behold war's sere and yellow leaf!
The gaudy foliage of the fight
Is withered with a sudden blight.
And here the wintry blast of death
Blows withered leaves and flowers to lay
In every sheltered hollow way;
And see the ambulance, the cart;
The broad tents, high and airy, pitched;
The horses at their feed-troughs hitched;
The slighter wounded grouped apart;
The surgeons moving here and there,

With all-absorbed and serious air,
Mute signals are, that well betray
The secret of some bloody fray."
And here my paper was in quest;
I drew it from among a mass
Of papers hidden in my breast.
It read: "All picket guards will pass,
Into or out of every line,
The bearer, and these friends of mine."
And then some cabalistic scrawl,
And "N. B. Forrest"—that was all.

The picket read, again re-read,
And then, expostulating, said:
"Why, man, for gracious heaven's sake,
You surely do not mean to take
These ladies on this road, and while
Our line of battle lies along
Yon ridge, and forty thousand strong!
And not above an honest mile;
Be sure you are beyond the flanks!
But if you bear a little west
You may escape them, worst or best.
You are determined and will go?
Good luck to you! No thanks; no thanks;
'T is but my duty. By all signs
You will be caught between the lines!
Remember that I told you so!"

The sound of cannon seemed so far
Along the distant ridgy east
I did not apprehend the least
Impediment or serious bar.

So pushing on each jaded steed
Almost unto his utmost speed,
We flew o'er many a stony ridge;
We dashed through many a shrunken rill;
Passed, here and there, a broken bridge;
Till winding up a higher hill,
That to a walk our gallop slowed;
And looking backward I espied
A stalwart footman cross the road
With slanted rifle, steady stride,
Whom fringing bushes soon did hide;
And thus, at intervals as wide
As that quite narrow wagon-way,
With steady step and slanted gun,
A long succeeding file of gray
Poured swiftly, crossing one by one.

And long as I my neck could crane,
I saw that vision o'er again:
A little gateway of the wood
Where peering man with rifle stood;
The bushes reached and hid him, then,
An instant more, the vacant place,
This man again, or other men?
Did one a narrow circle trace,
Or did a swiftly dropping stream
Of men drip onward in a dream
And thus a dim confusion seem,
A faint mysterious impress, made
Of lonely path and piney shade,
And phantom woodman's slanted gun
That vanished soon as looked upon?

"WITH SLANTED RIFLE, STEADY STRIDE"

And when upon a wooded knoll
That walled a long abandoned field,
Upon our ears distinctly stole
The chucking jolt of something wheeled.
I knew the harsh metallic sound
Of iron spindle, iron box,
In alternate, vibrating shocks
That sharply jarred along the ground.

In after-days, a curious thought
This distant metal murmur brought,
That in the covert of the leaves,
The battle demon, gloating, heaves
With iron laughter, while his prey
Walks on the ambuscaded way.
Here was a hut of rounded logs,
Some flax-haired children at the door,
A full supply of vicious dogs,
A woman tall and thin, who wore
A gaudy kerchief on her head
And at her breast an infant fed.

And then it was, that farther west
I heard a sharp and shrill report.
I knew the crack of rifle best,
I knew the distance, too, was short;
And more, the direst thought of all,
Which most completely did appall,
In this frail cabin of the pines,
We were entrapped between the lines.

I said as calmly as I could;
"That rifle shot bodes nothing good.
Too late, for us, it well divines

The mission of those figures bent,
The phantom riflemen who went
Across the road into the wood.
Another rifle shot! Ha! there!
A rattling volley fills the air,
And on the crest of yonder hill
A sudden long white jet of smoke!
An after-glow of flame, a stroke
Of angry roar, itself might kill
So frightfully it burst and broke."
And then there ran across the sky
A strange and shrill unearthly cry
That seemed as if it must be hurled
From some vindictive demon world
That in eccentric paths of fear
Approached our calmer world too near;
I followed it with turning eyes,
Expectant, terrified surprise,
And saw, or fancied, a dim path,
A streak of smoking, blistering blue,
A faint, uncertain trail of wrath
That ran the white sky through and through.
A shower of pine leaves drifted by;
But ere the crashing branches fell,
A wave of red earth leaped on high.
I faintly gasp: "The shell! the shell!"
And then we mutely wait in fear—
What other sounds of dread to hear!

Annita with much calmness said:
"I'm sure I'd better trust my head
Within this cabin's wooden walls;
These logs will stop the smaller balls.

Our horses here, as well, we'll tie;
There is no time to mount and fly.
Much better in this hut be found
Than mounted, scouring o'er the ground!"
I felt such admiration grow
As mortals very often feel
When some dread crisis doth reveal,
Or sudden dire occasion show
A courage that we did not know
Belonged to friend we long had known,
Nor dreamed such quality his own.

The Aunt and her bold German maid
Dismounted and had gone within.
We followed, too, ere they had been
A moment there, and quickly laid
Our watching heads along the edge
Of long and narrow window-ledge;
A horizontal window fixed
Adjacent, half-cut logs betwixt,
And where we waited, dumb with fright.
No human figure was in sight;
But all along the piney aisles
The battle-chorus roared and rang;
And high the screaming iron sang
Its demon chantings, miles and miles;
And there the sudden startling "wheep"
Of leaden balls that seemed to leap
From airy ambuscades, and near,
In thickening showers, past my ear,
Flew in a fast-increasing flight,
But deeply hidden from my sight;
And, now, it must be half-confessed,

These shrieking messengers of ire
My curious fancy did invest
With animated purpose dire,
Till every scream of hurtling shell,
Each rasping hiss of minie-ball,
Did seem a fiendish missile's call,
An inorganic battle-yell.
Each iron and each leaden sphere
Became a flitting demon fierce,
That in a mad, malign career
The very air did tear and pierce,
And rend the wooded shield of day
In sanguinary quest of prey.

And still, it seemed to me who stood,
And seeing, hearing nothing there,
Save, through the branches of the wood,
The screaming iron in the air,
These are the battle powers alone.
All human agency had grown
So far away, as if afloat
In some dim realm of doubt, remote,
There grew in me the odd belief,
And fanciful, that sound or sight
Of mortal foe would bring relief —
Nay more : a sort of half-delight.
Aeneas gladly turned his blows
From off the Harpies' demon breasts
Upon the more familiar crests
Of uninspiring mortal foes ;
So I deemed him almost friend
Whom, in the forest, I did see
His swift and cautious way to wend,

With ready gun, from tree to tree,
A tall, broad-shouldered, brawny man
With blanket brown and tightly rolled
That dropped its smooth dependent fold
Across his breast and circling ran
Till at his side the free ends hung;
Across his arm a rifle swung;
His right hand clutching at the stock;
His sinewy thumb upon the lock;
His dress of worn and dingy gray;
His great red beard that downward flowed;
His eye that fiercely flashed and glowed
On every object in his way;
His constant wariness that told
Of seasoned soldier cool and bold.
He made one of a group of four
That momentary cover took
Within the little sheltered nook
Beside the cabin's open door,
And there his keenly searching look
Did in my uniform descry
The presence of an enemy;
His rifle upward seemed to fly,
But ere he could the trigger press,
He caught the flutter of a dress,
Paused in bewilderment and doubt,
Approached the door and looked about,
Surveyed my uniform of blue
"My prisoners! Surrender! you!"
He said with fierce and angry shout.

I, very briefly, did explain,
And showed my paper once again.

He, glancing where Annita sat,
And with that untaught, native grace
Belonging to his mountain race,
In grave politeness raised his hat,
And said: "You have a trying place;
Our line of battle moves apace.
Some minutes hence its fierce fire will
Put you in greater peril, still.

"And I suggest, your yellow sash
You now unfold and quickly lash
Where it may wave above the roof.
The yellow flag will keep aloof
The wilder terrors of the fight.
A Yankee surgeon may be quite
As useful here as anywhere.
You sir, and these good women, too,—
Whose courage I can but admire,—
When we are fairly under fire,
Will have some trying work to do."

And once again his hat was raised;
And then the squad went on its way.
I from the cabin ridge-pole gazed,
And saw the dusky figures, gray,
Spring rapidly from tree to tree;
And thus by chance I came to see
A strangely fascinating sight:
The method of the skirmish fight;
I heard the skirmish bugle-call;
I saw the captain, gray and tall,
Beside a clump of small trees stop
And his uplifted rifle drop

Until a level it did find,
And then a puff of fire and smoke
Back floated on the tarnished wind —
A sharp and startling crack that spoke
A challenge loud and harsh, that flew
The narrow aisles of forest through
To where some objects dim and blue,
In leafy distance, seemed to crawl
Along the ridge's slanted wall.

I saw with what surprising skill
These men did quickly fire and load,
And hardly paused, but onward strode
Until below the crest of hill
They passed beyond and out of sight;
Then from the hollow, far below,
To'rds which I watched them swiftly go,
I saw a distant soldier's flight.
With head half-turned, he stooping flew
Toward the farther ridge's crest.
Another fleeing figure blue,
And more, and more were hotly prest.
They sprang from many a hiding-place
And join'd the dangerous, rearward race
Beyond the ridge's wooded brow;
And, running on that hillside now,
The tall red-bearded man in gray,
Whose men were scattered here and there,
To follow on the fateful way.
What will this savage man not dare?
Ha! there the cannon's blaze and roar!
But shell nor shot so far may fly;
Nor down the hazy, veiling sky

But have a short and deadly range.
Where running reinforcements pour,
A second sound so faintly strange!
Through all the pores of space it flows,
And momently it larger grows,
In rattling, snapping waves that dash—
The foaming surf of rifle crash.
It died away; the shots decrease,
And silence had a little lease,
And then upon my straining ear
A wild, strange cry, so high and clear,
A minute shrilly rose and fell,
It might have been a demon cheer
From some triumphant peak of hell.
It sent a chill along my blood
And changed it to a frigid flood.
"The rebel yell! the rebel yell!"
I murmured in appalléd tones
That seemed the echoings of groans,
As I my yellow flag unwound
And slowly clambered to the ground.

And then I heard the muffled sound
That goes with hosts of marching men;
The vast and multitudinous hum
Of human voices buzzing low;
Words of command that seemed to come
From unknown distances, and go
As speeds the flow of some swift tide;
And now some rapid horsemen ride
Along the dusty road, before,
And halting near the cabin door,
Some general, and staff they seemed.

And following upon them roared
A widening tide of dusty men.
The sun upon their rifles gleamed,
As from the shaded wood they poured,
And swept away into the glen.
While from the bottom of the dell,
And all along the line, rang out
A very human sounding shout,
Not like that wild barbaric yell
That in my mem'ry long will ring
As sharply as from yonder hill
It seemed to skyward leap and spring,
In clattering chorus strangely shrill,
A multitudinous, savage cry
That pierced the air, the wood, the sky.
Then these gray men may have — who knows —
A shout for friends, a yell for foes;
A cry their Scottish fathers knew,
And from the highland eagles caught
And far across the ocean brought
To these like highlands bold and blue.

And here the explanation stalks!
This hearty shout is quick acclaim
For daring feat of him who walks
Bare-headed, powder-grimed and lame,
Half-held by two, who at his side
With helping strength and cautious stride,
Now steadily our cabin neared.
I saw the great red, flowing beard,
All matted o'er, and crimson stained;
One brawny hand his gun retained.
While he some question answering stood,

I saw a little pool of blood
From hidden wounds that oozed and drained,
And heard him loudly, fiercely say:
"We drove them from their guns away;
And back upon their second line.
We have their guns at yonder pine!
They fought determinedly at first,
Till all our force upon them burst;
And then they were compelled to flee.
You do as much to push their flight,
I promise you before the night
We'll camp beside the Tennessee."
And as these boasting words he said,
He waved his gun above his head.
And all along the route I heard
Some forward, bold and stirring word,
And then again the rising cheer;
While eager feet alertly stept,
As feeling not fatigue nor fear,
So on the swaying column swept.
I watched it while afar it crept
Beyond the very farthest pine,
And there but for an instant sank;
Then paused, and westward by the flank
Moved on the bristling battle line.

I cried, "You may be useful yet!"
The bearded captain laughing said,
"No chance acquaintance I forget;
This furrow ploughed across my head
I think you may examine first,
It hurts enough to be the worst;
It came from ugly Minie-ball,—

A close and quite unwelcome call—
And next the one below my knee,
A bit of shell, it seemed to me
As still within the wound it stuck.
No? We will see where this one struck
The bone, and just above the wrist;
Go on! I'll stand a little twist
To demonstrate the bone is sound.
If I had known myself so whole,
And only scratched with trifling wound,
I should have staid upon the ground!
But listen to that rattling roll!
In half an hour, upon my soul,
I think you will have wounds to dress!
Ha! listen how they forward press!"
A long and growing, frightful roar,
The like I had not heard before,
Crashed from the ridges blazing crest
And rolled away along the west.

And then again the screaming shell
Scarce heeded through the forest went,
Their blazing arcs of terror bent
Adown the sky, and thickly fell.

And from the half-obscured ravine,
Some men came slowly, glancing back;
I saw a silken standard's sheen
Against the oak trees' darker green,
The color-sergeant planted fair;
And stragglers coming thickly now
Did halt and form and stretch them there
Behind the hill's protecting brow.

And some knelt down beside the trees,
With elbows resting on their knees,
And taking short and rapid aim
As at a target, or at game
Which on the hillside paused to feed,
Unconscious of the marksman's bead.

And thicker grew the straggling crowd;
The hum of voices swelling loud,
Disjointed fragments of their speech
My inattentive ear did reach.
I scarcely gathered their portent:
"Where is the second regiment?"
I heard some anxious soldier call;
A reckless wag did answer bawl,
"They got their furlough, started home,
And at a very lively gait.
They told me none of them could wait,
And I must bid you quickly come!"

This bit of irritating chaff
Called out an angry, fierce reply,
In tones of menace, loud and high,
That met a general, jeering laugh —
A strange, unmeet and jarring sound.
Some stretched themselves upon the ground;
Some sought this regiment or that;
Some on the earth conversing sat;
And exclamations such as these
Flew like bewildered swarms of bees:
"Killed! both of them! I saw them fall —
The Colonel, Major, Captain, all
The officers and half the men;
No fewer lost than six in ten!"

And then at last I slowly know
These broken regiments for those
That only half an hour ago
So hotly fell upon their foes.
They calmly answer nod or beck,
Or noisy comrade's jesting call.
Are these a beaten battle's wreck?
I listen to the words that fall —
They have no coloring of fright;
None wear the hasty look of flight.
Each, laughing, boasts he led the van
That to the rear alertly ran,
And carelessly essays to find
A sheltered place of rest behind
A newly-formed, defiant line
With rattling bayonets that shine.

In after days I came to learn
The lesson here I dimly read;
The soldiers of the Western world
May from a beaten front be hurled —
They will not flee, have never fled;
But beaten, sullenly will turn,
And from a slow, reluctant flight
Will stubbornly renew the fight.
They have been *beaten* oft, I ween,
But *routed*, they have never been.

This line a gap had left so wide
Through which I, startled, turned to see
Our escort of the morning ride
With urgent spur and bridle free.
Through widened spaces wider spread,

It seemed I knew their horses' tread;
The very tone of each shrill neigh
Did on my recollection weigh
With such a sinking sense of dread,
It seemed my fainting spirit bled,
And soundless doubt its current drank,
And save one thought all thought was blank —
"Rides *she* in this imperilled rank?
It can not be!" And o'er and o'er
I said this weak and foolish word,
And still my heart the answer heard
In that despairing look she wore
When last I saw her eyes, before!

And then some premonition turned
My gaze upon a lighted spot,
And where the sunlight, bright and hot,
Through rift in foliage blazed and burned;
And there within that lighted place,
That fiery gateway of the wood,
She suddenly appeared and stood,
And turned to me her radiant face;
Her face so pallid and so fair,
Framed in her glittering, golden hair.
She seemed, indeed, a blaze of light,
That dazzled me and made me close
My eyes for instant, swift repose;
An instant and my lids uprose,
To find that she had gone from sight.

And now I saw this line of men
Melt slowly into woodland shade;
I watched each veteran brigade,

But hardly knew the how or when
They disappeared; nor why they should;
So had that fleeting vision wrought
Upon me till I was distraught.
I would have followed if I could —
Had not Annita's gentle hand
Restrained me with its soft command.
I looked into her dark brown eyes
And saw therein the sweet surprise
Of sudden tears that downward slipped
And her long lashes jewel-tipped.

"I have a dark, prophetic fear,"
She murmured, sobbing in my ear.
"That pale, fierce woman of the night
Stands in my memory's after-light
So sweetly, sadly tender grown,
As some dead sister of my own."

Up from the wooded glens there came
A widening sheet of sputtering flame,
That flared and waned upon our sight,
The red aurora of the fight.
And every airy sound-thread bore
Unto our ears its bundled bands
Of noise — a multitudinous roar,
As if each eager pine-tree's straws
Gave martial, daring feat applause
And clapped their myriad sounding hands.

And hours or minutes, I knew not
Time's periods that bounded by;
With ricocheting cannon-shot
And bullets' deadly sibilance

The air was one terrific cry.
In horrible, expectant trance
I heard in some red edge of dream
That wild, fierce, human eagle-scream,
The rebel yell, far-pealing, shrill
From many a rocky, smoke-hid hill.

And then from out the failing roar,
Out of the cloak of battle-smoke,
Thrown out by slowing cannon-stroke,
Into this yellow-bannered bay,
This narrow bight of peaceful day,
The battle storm-surge breaking bore,
Its strandward creeping fringe of drift,
The wounded of an army corps.

I saw where two had stooped to lift
A slender, shapely, pallid boy;
I saw them as they were alone;
I saw as if no human tide
Rushed on before, behind, beside;
I saw, and felt my heart had grown
A lump of lead, a shell of stone.

He pointed with a cry of joy
Then broke away and wildly rushed
Into my arms, and there lay crushed
In one long spasm of embrace.
Her lips, her breath upon my face;
Her words that came in sobbing sighs;
Her blue, tear-washed and pleading eyes!
What were the sobbing words she said?
"I only ask to lay my head
Where once I asked to let me lie—

Here on your breast until I die."
And more and more she strove to say,
And through the thickening look of death
That piteous, long-drawn, sobbing breath
Would, for an instant, clear away
The mists above her tender eyes;
And then I heard her low replies
To every wild and frantic word
That clamored, eager to be heard.

And then some awful whisper sped
From lip to lip, about me there,
Until it vexed the very air,
With, O, the burden of the dead!

And afterward I chafed and raved
To think I dumb and silent stood
And saw them bear her through the wood;
Perhaps she might have yet been saved;
But this brown shawl that has the blood
About that corner! See! So much?
A wound so wide and deep were such,
And leaving such a breadth of stain,
As could not let her life remain.
Think you not so? O, think again!
Remember, too, this shawl I pressed
Hard down upon her bubbling breast!
Think you if I had loved her less
I might have used a higher skill?
A small blood vessel, cut, might kill
If I had not the skill to dress.
And seeing her with lips so white,
And rings of white about her eyes,

Numbed me with such a dread surprise
I could do nothing quick nor right.
And after all, I let her die!
But after all and after all
Did I not press this heavy shawl?
I pressed it hard enough, did I?
You 're sure I used what skill I had?
You 're sure? O, tell me, are you sure
For such a wound there is no cure?
Were I not sure I should go mad!

CANTO X.

O, more than sister! more than wife!
My friend, my best adviser still,
Who leads me gently down the hill
That slopes toward the edge of life;
Whose brown eyes on the path of years,
Have shed their pity and their pain
Of soft, obliterating rain,
And dews of sympathetic tears;
Of my heart-sorrow hear me tell
The sadder story of our days.
You know it, as I know, so well;
The tale that bears in every line
Some hint of thy deserved praise.
On thy sweet name still may I call;
Still let me clasp thy gentle hand.
Thou art the very type of all
The good, the beautiful and true;
The better spirit of our land
Abides in you, and such as you.

The tale of my heart-sorrow? Nay,
The tale of ours, I should have said,
Our love, our pity and our dead;
Our common legacy to-day;
But O! the greater burden thine!
Thy sorrow for a human soul
Steeped in the very dregs of dole,
With but thy love in central shine
That in the darker disk of night
Displays some solitary sprite,
There flitting in a narrow cone
Of weird and supernatural light,
That has the power, and that alone,
To show how dark the world has grown.

So flit I in a shadow-dance
And lighted by thy loving glance
That howsoever warm and fond,
Can light no outer depth, beyond
The inner circle round my feet;
And still, thus proven strong and sweet.
Unutterably grateful, I,
For this lone ray of brighter sky;
And yet, and yet I might have been
Within a vast scintillant sheen
Of world-wide, life-light all my day,
Had *she* but lived. Ah! dotard, nay!
And nay! and nay! All Time says nay!
And every plain historic page,
And every legend of the age,
And of all ages, still will say:
"Not so. O, dotard! dreamer! nay."

The fairest thing of mortal mould,
The purest clay-imprisoned soul,
Still does some human poison hold ;
Earth yields not wholly her control.

And O, so infinitely worse
Were this thy sorrow and thy grief ;
How past all measure of relief,
How searing, withering the curse
That might thy blighted soul have whirled
And blown about a blacken'd world,
As brown leaves blown about a grave :
Grief hath its purposes to save.

It might have been, aye, might have been,
That she had lived to cool and change,
To show some growth of mean and strange,
And thou hadst in thy sorrow seen
Each thing of beauty fade away
Or fall into a loathed decay.

And thou wouldst know thyself deceived ;
Yon creature but a beauteous mask ;
All those sweet things thou hadst believed
With sweet believings, sweetest task
That scattered roses in thy path,
Had turned to shapes of pain and wrath,
To sow among thy growing wheat
The tares of falsehood and deceit.
Grief hath its purposes to save ;
And aught of leaf or bud assured
Is better far to be endured
Than brown leaves blown about a grave.

A tender sorrow, like my own,
Is not a thing from which to shrink;
What poisoned chalice holds our drink
Still swims with blossoms sweetly blown.
And as the sudden touch of fire
Preserves each fiber of the wood,
So death is a funereal pyre
That soon the body may consume,
But fixes till the day of doom
Each quality, each feature fast
While mem'ry of a life may last.

And so I hold her in my heart
Most beautiful and true and fond,
To hold forever safe beyond
The changing touch of time or art.

And this the crown of life must be,
And better than mere life can give,
Through other, later lives to live,
In fond, regretful memory.

Throughout a life! How very brief
The human meaning of the phrase;
All time is but our little days.
It seems to us beyond belief
These sorrows and these loves of ours,
That fill our lives up to the brim,
And foam above the highest rim;
Sink like a rain-fall in the sand;
Or fall away like autumn flowers,
When frosts are over all the land.
It is beyond belief that she,

So wrought of human love and strength,
With such strong pinion and so free,
Should wing such way of little length.
And thus my heart takes up the cry,
"How could she die! how could she die!"

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS

A SCENE ON THE WABASH

POEMS OF WOODS AND WATERS.

KARMA:

A THOUGHT FROM THE WABASH.

Once more the wind is in the west,
And rippling through brown bars of trees,
Melodious with the songs of bees,
It fans the glowing prairie's breast;
It spreads a veil of silver-white
Across the river's azure-blue;
It drives my yellow-winged canoe
Among faint flares of liquid light
From lower depths of shadowy green,
Where miles of gold-twig willows lean,
To throw their tinted shadows down
Where, in unfathomed deepness, drown
The forests of some under-world
Whose feather'd foliage, plumed and curled,
Slants outward from a nether shore.

I hear the soft, deep, mellow roar
Of this broad flood of prairie air;
I feel its keen electric thrills,
That with renewing touches rare
Have healing power upon my ills.

I, who was born among the hills—
The Appalachians, round and blue—
Turn, O! my prairies, unto you,

Ye billowy seas of grassy lands!
Ye have no threat for him who stands
Upon your sweet bee-haunted strands;
No wrecks lie rotting in your deeps;
No mouldering bones in drifted heaps;
No piles of golden treasure, wrung
From riven ships that hardly clung
Together for a little space,
Until the mightier final wave
Made there a coffer and a grave.
O! gentle prairies, ye have not
Those creatures of an olden race—
The specters of the ocean grot,
The herds of cold and cruel beasts,
Grim guests at all revolting feasts
Of sea-deep carnage and of blood.

The timid creatures that did hold
Slight tenure of thy primal tide
And all thy sunny, sinless flood,
Were never vengeful, fierce nor bold;
And not for long did they abide,
Nor man's accession dared dispute;
They fled before his wandering boot,
They gazed upon his cabin roof,
Then fearing, wondering, withdrew
To fastnesses beyond his view,
In swamp or forest, far aloof.

Green ocean of the prairie, then
The fostering, sheltering home of men,
I turned me from my mountain side
To where thy billows swelling wide

Are set with aisles of prairie-groves,
Indented deep with winding bays
Of forest lands; cut through with streams,
Like this lone river clear and fair
As Pharpar is, that slips and roves
In some faint atmosphere of dreams;
Translucent as the skyward air,
Seen through a rift of summer-cloud
With harvest of blue distance mowed.

Here I can breathe the deepest breath,
Here are the lightest loads of life,
Here I may wage the longest strife
With all the thickening hosts of death;
Here, longest, manhood shall withstand
The shrivelling heat of mighty towns;
The ash of nations; centered wealth;
All glittering hideousness that frowns
Beneath some roseate mask of health,
That hides a people's sorest wound
Behind white masks of marbled walls
And under thunder-clouds of sound.

Not death, nor yet decay forestalls
The mightier decrees of Fate;
Most wise are they who do but wait
The bursting of the chrysalis.
A nation's wounds are riven shells,
That full-winged civilization swells,
Forgotten in a vale like this.

The reign of majesty and power—
Proud glory of a nation's days—
Has ever been the darker hour

Of travail for the masses, bowed,
As wailing in the bitterness
And helplessness of their blind ways,
They seek impossible redress;
Or vex the air with plainings loud,
Or sound uncertain calls to strife,
Or dash their heads against a stone —
That stone the bottom stair of life,
Up which some conqueror seeks a throne.

Most wise are they who only wait;
There must be small, if there be great;
The high were not, but for the low,
How can there be the perfect fruit,
But by the flower, the bole, the root?
Roots first must delve that trees may grow;
Yet 'tis the compass of the flower
To blossom only for an hour;
The fruit must ripen in the year;
Both fall into a swift decay
As loathesome, in its passing day,
As each was fair and sweet before.

The poor may have small hope in store,
Still less they have of care and fear;
The tree that gives this perfect birth
Of flower and fruit must, yet, be strong
To drive its roots deep down in earth —
The flower and fruit are not for long;
The bole and delving roots must be
Eternal as eternity!

What shallow clamor, then, is this
That sounds the plainings of the poor?

Man has his metes of joy and pain —
There are no boundless plains of bliss.
The great come, surely, to endure
Their greatness as a burdened beast.
Our nerves feel, equally, the strain
Of too much pleasure, too much pain.
There can not be an endless feast,
Nor perpetuity of sweets.

Sense is a pendulum that swings
In equal arcs, with equal beats,
Perpetually between two things,
Or, rather, 'twixt opposing states,
As gladness is opposed to grief,
As pleasure is opposed to pain.
Not all the power of all the fates
Can work one moment of relief
From this, the primal law of life;
There is no wisdom that can train
A human life to either pole;
Pleasure and pain are but one whole.
Peace follows, surely, after strife;
Strife follows after peace, again,
As night must ever follow day;
The highest wisdom can not stay
Life's pendulum, at either end;
No power in heaven nor earth can bend
The arc of human life, one jot;
Whate'er my case, it matters not;
So much of pleasure I must feel,
So much of pain I, too, must know.
The fool is he who strives to steal
A hoard of joys unto himself,

Or hopes to purchase bliss with pelf.
All sense, all feeling, in us grow;
These are not of external things.

Well is it Hope is drawn with wings;
Of every life there is no day
But has its flitting ray of Hope;
A little farther on the way
We find fresh energy to cope
With all the adverse powers of Fate.

Behold! how calmly I can wait
My destiny! at very worst,
'T is but to die disgraced and shamed;
Straightway, upon the world, to burst
New-born, new-heralded, new-starred;
With life new-purposed and new-framed
For easy tasks, that erst were hard,
To sit, soft-skied, 'neath kindlier vault,
With all the hounds of care at fault.

And in this broader, grander view,
Behold! with what tremendous sway
The arc of life sweeps down its way,
Across the darkened disk of death,
From one life on and through the next.
What means that vague and antique text,
Still taught in phrases old and new,
And breathed in each succeeding breath
Of prophet, sage and seer of eld?
All men of every time, have held
The coming life must compensate
For all inflictions any fate
On any mortal can impose.

No recent doctrine, I disclose;
This is the doctrine of all times,
Aye, and all nations, of all climes.
Talk not to me of one brief life;
It were not worth the living then,
If these few years of peace or strife,
Were once, and only once, for men.

Or if I dropped into a grave
As rain-drop in an ocean-wave,
Or if — as women love to think —
The trappings of a coffin-lid
Were but a cage that vainly hid
The shape of some angelic wing,
Till at some time, all undefined,
Some half-way mark, on chaos-brink —
My cerements, I might there unwind,
And change to some be-feathered thing
Whose office is to string and sing
Through endless ages, on and on:
A toil they call eternal bliss.

I teach a better faith than this,
I teach, that he who bravely tries
And fails, and fails, until he dies;
Although he dies — shall come again,
To find his ancient foeman gone,
Or bound, and helpless, in his hands.

If under harrow I have lain;
And if my foe, exultant, stands
With spurning foot upon my breast,
May I not taunt him with a smile?
Hath not the arc of life one rest

To swing me on a little while?
It swings me up, it swings him down.
To-day I met, with lowering frown,
Some stranger, with a coal-black eye;
He came to press an urgent suit;
With words and glances, cold and high,
I drove him out, into despair.
In some past life his dainty boot
Stamped on my bosom, aye, but where?

And yesterday some hearty palm
Was warmly struck against my own—
Some name that I had never heard,
And yet there sounded in the word
Some echo of a time of calm,
Some hint of merrier moments flown,
All dust from ash of memory held
Deep in the secret urn of eld.

How knew I these—my foe, my friend—
By intuition? Nay and nay,
A thousand times again, I say;
And yet a thousand times again
I met them, age on age ago;
One, on some ancient battle-plain,
One, by some Dorian river-bend;
Comrade and foe they will remain,
For time is time and can not end.

For me there are a myriad births;
Time and again I walk all earths,
For there is many an earth to walk;
Who knows if distances can balk
The infinite-winged seed of man?

Who knows whence first blew thistle-down?
Who knows what spicy astral breeze
Blew down the primal seed of trees?
From star to star is but a span!

Time was, I wore a kingly crown,
And so I have the pride of kings;
Time was, I pulled the galley-oar,
And so I keenly feel the slings
And arrows that can gall the poor.
And I must come in every guise
That man has worn and man may wear;
What role I play I need not care.
Sometime the role I dearly prize
In some new life will be my own.
From hardest lots I may have flown,
Out of old lives and into this,
That is, so nearly, filled with bliss?

So I have come to envy none
The sudden fortune, all unearned;
Beneath what heat of ancient sun
For this he may have toiled and burned?
Nor yet I rail against the rich;
The story of gaunt Lazarus
Is sorely misinterpreted;
Put into broader meanings, thus
The olden story should have read:
One grovelled one day in the ditch,
One feasted in his purple fine;
The arc of life swung past this sine,
And swinging back, brought these reversed:
Dives last, and happy Lazarus first.

And so, fair River of Storms and Sands,
Framed in thy prairie's autumn gold,
I come to thee with outstretched hands,
Perhaps from lives remote and old;
Or if I come from nearer time,
The high-noon of my present day,
I come with lifted hands that pray
Some blessing of this fickle clime,
In all its suddenness of change;
Its power to obliterate
The face of nature, as by fate,
With might of water and the range
Of summer's heat and winter's cold.
May these old memories enfold
And wrap some gauzy veil about
Thy scenes as ample distance draws
Its farthest blue, remotest gauze,
Around the vaguest realms of doubt,
And holds them thus, until we seem
To doubt them, as we doubt a dream.

A WINTER THOUGHT.

My life is as yon cedar
  Heaped with the drifting snow;
White on its dead top branches,
  Green where they lean so low.

My life is as the cedar
  That clings, though its top be dead.
Not even the kings of the forest
  May die from the foot to the head.

DUBITO.

We can not guess the falling of a leaf
A moment ere it flutters from the stalk ;
We can not know the coming of a grief
By aught of shadow on our daily walk.

We are so blind that, howsoe'er we strain
Our mental iris, we may never see
Our destiny bend warningly, but vain,
From the near darkness of eternity.

We are so deaf that we may seldom hear
Fate's stealthy step with rhythm like our own.
We laugh when we should weep, that, oh, so near,
Death muffled walks, unhindered and unknown.

Motes in a sunbeam, some brief time we stand
Cased in a narrow cylinder of light
With radius so short, our outstretched hand
Feels the thick darkness of the untried night.

HYKSOSIA.

My heart stirs fluttering in my breast
At the first south-blown clouds of spring,
And moves me to a strange unrest
The whistle of a wild duck's wing.
The first warm glance the sun doth fling
Lifts the pale grasses where they lie,
And to my ear the west winds bring
The prairie-chicken's lonesome cry.

And following each its several bent,
The free winds rustling come and go;
They fan my brow with discontent,
They drive wild, restless waves that grow
Upon my calm life's placid flow;
And sudden floods resistless pour
Where grassy banks, down sloping low,
The swelling stream restrain no more.

I would be gone, I know not where!
I would some nobler thought might thrill
My soul than yet! Down from the bare
Cropped pastures of thy old-time hill,
Dwelling in tents that fold at will,
Brown Shepherd Sire! descends from thee,
This legacy of habit. Still
The Nomad's spirit stirs in me.

EL DORADO.

Give me a stretch of summer seas,
A pebbly beach, whereon a boat
Grinds, swinging back and forth, afloat,
The shuttle of a chain and breeze.

A slowly moving wheel of shade,
Whose half-completed circles run
Against an outer wheel of sun,
Till sun and shadow faint and fade.

A smell of flowers, a breath of June,
My pencil, pen and violin;

WABASH RIVER, TERRE HAUTE

For thoughts that are too airy, thin
For words, must breathe in mellow tune.

There let my days serenely slip
With brush and pencil, tune and rhyme,
And, thus beguiling care and time,
Have more than man's companionship.

INDIAN RIPPLE.

A northward stretch of yellow,
On to the green corn's edge,
A slender fringe of sedge
A background, dim and mellow;

A clump of green-blue trees,
And one white summer cloud
Like an old man, pallid-browed,
With his thin locks in the breeze;

And far across the river
A delicate vale of white
Streams over the bluer light
Where small waves gleam and shiver;

And the Indian Ripple lies
Right here at my dripping feet,
And singing plaintively sweet
Its midsummer melodies,

Full of their quaint, rare story;
And every green grass glume
Is a miniature Indian plume
Wrought in a dream of glory.

FERONIA.

Tell them I 'm weary of their shallow mirth;
No, don't say that — 't will give them needless pain;
And, after all, these butterflies of earth
Leave on Sarcasm's blade a life-blood stain.

No; rather say 't is freak of a strange mood —
A mood they may not feel nor understand —
That lures me out to seek the lonely wood,
By the moist breath of summer blossoms fanned.

Where stretch the tall oaks many a waving bough
Down to the shadows that beneath them play,
Like midnight billows heaving far below,
While flecked with silver foam of moonlight spray;

Where the tall rocks lift each a whitened head,
In silence poised, as if to hear
Some dark wood spirit's ghostly, muffled tread,
Or weird voice wailing in the branches near;

Where broad, smooth plats of intervening sward
Flash with their liquid jewels' borrowed light,
Like shadowy sky-lands, pale and amber-starred,
As seen through rents in the dark cloak of night,

There waits for me — but stop, bend close your ear;
Let me but whisper; do not speak nor move,
Lest skulking, hair-brained prattler see or hear —
There waits — Feronia, goddess of the grove.

The long-lost Pleiad shines from out her eyes,
Like Polar glacier gleams her snowy breast,
And her soft cheeks reflect the crimson dyes
That paint, at sunset hour, the glowing west.

Her smile is not for all; 't is but the gift
That raises one above the common clay,
And on the mind's strong wings doth lightly lift
My heart into the light of broader day.

May precious gifts of song, though least of all,
In this strange heritage, my portion be!
When even slend'rest song hath power to call
A goddess in her groves to welcome me.

FALL FLOWERS.

There are sonnets to modest daisies,
And songs to the blushing rose,
And poets have rhymed the praises,
Of every flower that grows,
And all the varied graces
The Spring or the Summer knows,

Save the homely and hardy flowers,
The bravest among them all,
That ne'er graced maiden's bowers,
Nor bloomed by a lordly wall;
They gladden the dreamy hours,
These plain-faced flowers of Fall.

In their modest yellow and blue,
Or in dullest of purple clad,
Fall blossoms of soberest hue
Are sedate, but are never sad;
They bravely weather the Autumn through,
And make the crisp mornings glad.

They make me think of a steadfast friend,
Or a faithful mother or wife,
That patiently on to the solemn end
Goes on, through tempest and strife.
The bitterest struggle may make her bend,
But she flies not — even for life.

So when the Summer is over
And cometh the wind and frost,
And the Spring's bloom like a lover,
In the first chill blast, is lost;
A loss you never recover,
Through Autumn or Winter frost.

And yet, while the heart is yearning
For the dead of the Summer hours,
With a grief that to joy is turning,
We welcome the Autumn flowers;
Ere 'tis too late for the learning,
There is beauty that still is ours.

LESSONS FROM LIFE.

A FAITH.

I weave me into the woof of my rhyme,
An anecdote of a former time;
Of Fritz and his playing General Schwerin.
Unlike our Godless legends, *therein*,
That all our champions of belief
In later battles are come to grief,
While modern Goliaths take their ease
To spank our Davids across their knees,
And bind such youngsters in their slings,
Where poultices would be elegant things.
(From which the Godless gleefully draw
The cut of an ancient Hoosier "saw.")
I say, unlike our stories *therein*,
Is this old legend of Fritz and Schwerin.

Once while the war of the Seven Years
Was spilling its vintage of blood and tears,
High on the mountains and under the pines,
In toilsome, tiresome, wearisome march,
Gloomed with the shadows of pine and larch,
King Frederick rode at the head of his lines,
Impatiently and fretfully ill at ease,
And casting about for a friend to tease;
When luckily there Graf Schwerin fares,
Reading an old dutch book of prayers.

"Tell me, Schwerin," he teasingly said,
"How is it that thy bold warrior head,
Ever the first to leap at a chance
Of Frankish saber or Cossack lance,
Ever the last to turn in flight
Out of a lost and ruinous fight,
Will droop like a woman's, bowing down
At a thing of beads and a monkish gown?
And how thy voice, that quavereth not
Under the battle's terrible roar;
But peals like the thunder of cannon shot,
Or shrills like the eagle's while they soar
Above all danger, above all fear—
How can this warrior voice so rare
Fall down to the timorous whine I hear
Tremble and vex the very air
With a puling wail thou callest prayer?"

Graf Schwerin slowly raised his eyes,
And a look of hurt and of quick surprise,
All barren of every hypocrite art,
And void of cant and fuming spurt
That blows where a Pharisee's husk is hurt;
An honest, indignant look he flung,
That cut straight in to the scoffer's heart.

"Majestit," slowly he thus began,
In the rare, quaint phrase of the German tongue;
"A score of times thou 'st kissed my cheek"
(For this was a strange and silly way
Men had with men in an older day)
"For deeds of valor that I have done.
A thousand times I have heard thee speak

(Beyond deserving) that but for me
There were no Frederick, nor Germany ;
And I say from the heart, that were it not
For what I know is a Power that minds
Me through the tempests of cannon-shot,
I were but a reed in a storm of winds.

I think God has his differing way
For different men — as thou and me.
Thou dost not need to feel nor to see
The hand that, for *me*, *must* guide and stay."
Long into that grim, old warrior face
King Frederick searchingly, sidelong gazed,
Like one that was dazed, or, at least, amazed ;
His unspurred steed, for a time forgot,
Slowed down to a walk or a jogging trot.

The silence that follows a strong reproof
Fell there, till the muffled roar of the hoof
And the chuckling rattle of cannon wheels
Are sounds that the ear hears not, but feels.
Fritz gravely said : "Old comrade of mine,
Undreamt of *me*, is a faith like thine ;
But I do believe it is thy belief.
Were I not worse than the veriest thief
To raise one finger to dispossess,
Or make thy treasure a hair's-weight less?
Henceforth, and unto my latest days,
Fritz shall not smile when Schwerin prays."

So saying, the warrior's hand he caught,
And held it in Frederick's warmest grasp,
That clung for long in a friendly clasp,
While both rode silently wrapped in thought.

A SONNET.

[Near the close of McCullough's career, and after one of his most successful performances, while the applause of the audience was still thundering in his ears, a little girl handed him her autograph album, and he wrote therein this significant line: "Is it a voice, or nothing, answers me?"]

"Is it a voice, or nothing, answers me?"
So wrote a painter of the souls of men
In fierce and lofty bitterness; and when
The play-world rang his praise from sea to sea,
He heard beneath alway, eternally —
Beneath the clamor of the public tongue,
Beneath the hollow chorus that it sung —
The gibberings of the individual lips;
He heard the minor jibes and quirks and quips;
He saw beneath the storm of flowers flung
From heartless hands that presently are swung
In venomous relentlessness that grips
The countless lashes of the scorpion-whips,
From whose sharp thongs *his* soul-blood drains and drips.

THE JUDAS TREE.

A curious legend, simply told,
Of a time when the world was not so old,
Nor yet so good as the world we see,
I tell of the Redbud—Judas tree.

'T was time of the month when the moon was round,
And time of the year when the blooming ground
Was green with its carpet of April grass.
The sun was down and it came to pass

That two men drew themselves away
From the group of comrades that near them lay,
Stretched on the grass at their drowsy ease,
In the moon-cast shadow of olive trees.
Hedged with a fringing of cedar wood;
Eastward a white walled city stood.

Hand in hand there, the two men gazed,
One where the lights of the city blazed;
Small and slender was he, the grace
Of a girlish beauty was on his face;
His eyes were blue as the sparkling sea,
Or the moonlit bosom of Galilee;
His hair, in masses of pinky red,
Curled and clung to his shapely head.

The other, tall, and with gaunt, dark eyes,
Sad as a winter's evening skies—
Wild and sad as are his alway
Who dreams of his children dead in a day.
Up spake the former: "What dreadful thought
Hath on thy features such shadows wrought?"
The dark man, stooping, then gently laid
His nervous hand on the blooming head,
"The time comes on," he said, "that proves
Man suffers for none but him he loves."

A conscious flush was upon the cheek
Of the younger man as he strove to speak;
Tears stood in his eyes: "O, friend, I swear
That the faith and the love for thee I bear,
Can no more change than the bloom of yon tree,
White as the salt-strewn shore of the sea,

Can instant change to the pinky red
Of these curls thy hand twines round my head."
And he laughed as he shook his ringlets free,
In boyish — nay, rather, in girlish glee.

The dark man turned, and a meaning smile
Hovered about his lips the while.
Slowly he raised his thin hand, cold,
And, fixedly pointing, said: "Behold,
Here in this moment, before us both,
Yon bush bears witness to your false oath."
And Judas, fearfully raising his head,
Beheld the white blooms turning red.

And since that hour, in every clime,
That bloom shall be red till the end of time,
And children shout, when its flowers they see,
"Behold the blush of the Judas tree!"

DE PARVIS VEXATUS.

This morn I looked from my north window-pane
And saw a great bald eagle beat the air
With frenzied wings that struck and strove amain
Against a flock of crows that poised them there,
Pecking and taunting at his back. In vain
His strong claws rent the clouds in bootless strain,
His fierce eyes blazing with a lurid flame
Struck not his cunning foes, but his own brain
And heart consumed, till courageless and tame
He fluttered weakly downward to the plain
Dejected, spiritless, and almost slain.

I have some spirits known, whose eagle wings
Grew their strong plumage in the upper clouds.
They soared far sunward o'er those fluttering things
That take low flights in envious, chattering crowds,
Till some all-evil moment — such as brings
Antipodes together and downward flings
These broad-winged monarchs of the upper deeps; —
Then felt Death's sting as from each twig there springs
The human crow, that cawing, carping, keeps
At the proud victim's back, and safely clings
Until the worn heart snaps its fraying strings.

THE RIDDLE OF THE SPHINX.

I take it that this is the difference
  Betwixt a friend and a brother;
(And by this rule a placid fool
  May know the one from the other.)
A friend upholds me when I'm right
  And while I am rich and strong.
A brother (though poor I am, and obscure),
  Stands by me, *knowing I'm wrong*.

And every day of my life, I say,
  "I neither would stoop nor bend
One inch for you, if I but knew
  You simply and only a friend."
But eyes are dust, nor pierce the crust
  That hides one man from another,
Nor midnight of task comes soon to unmask
  All men, and show me my brother.

I know my enemy at a glance ;
I know just where to find him ;
I've only to know to ward or throw,
And how I may safely bind him.
Friendship is bought, and blood is nought
Though suckled, mayhap, from one mother.
I cut in middle the Sphinx's old riddle
In learning to know a brother.

Perhaps a thousand thousand years
That great stone face looked sadly,
And on our faces, my friends, are traces
Of thought that wrought as madly.
Those sad, stone lips the simoon sips
And whisper, one to the other,
The Riddle (born in Eden's morn)
Of the false and the Real Brother.

A woman's love may flee as a dove,
Or fall as a broken fetter ;
We grieve an hour for a faded flower,
Then cheerily seek the better.
I read thy riddle, O, Face of stone,
As poet hath read it never !
Thou camest to own thyself, alone,
Alone in the desert forever.

And if, O, Sphinx, I learn to know
In hours of fiery trial,
The brother by blood is an image of mud,
A changeling son of Belial ;
Still I shall eat my crust in peace,
And take my times of sleeping,

Nor turn my eyes to brazen skies
In wild and wrathful weeping.

Blood is a thing of this lower earth,
And full of its earthly mire.
Man's craven feet are ever fleet
To flee from thy trial by fire.
True Brothers are human Century-plants,
The ages' beauteous leaven,
They burst full-grown, as flowers blown
From the blossoming heart of heaven.

A LESSON OF LIFE.

My little man, come hither to me,
And I'll teach thee a lesson of life,
The stereotyped lessons are dim to see
And have capital letters in STRIFE.
But "strife" is not a good word, my man,
So wipe it clean from thy page ;
Had I done thus when my youth began
I had lightened my task in age.

My sturdy, strong-limbed three-year-old,
The fire hath need of a log
As big as thy chubby arms can hold.
"It is out in the rain and fog!"
Why, then, thou must toddle thy short ways,
Even in fog and wet,
For roads will be longer, some of these days,
And logs will be harder to get.

Throw down thy log! there, not so hard,
Now stand by the fire to "dry!"
Ha! that task brought its quick reward,
I saw by the flash of thine eye
And the heaving of thy small breast, just then,
With the pride of a feat well done;
O, "Babies are wholly Little Men,"
Are the truest words under the sun!

I might have sheltered thee from the cold
And wet of this winter day,
But thou wilt know as thy feet grow old
And thy soft hair, stiff and gray,
That roads grow longer without a turn,
And logs more heavy to bear;
Next year that task will be harder to learn
Thou shouldst have learned this year.

ST. JOHN'S DAY.

Brethren of the mystic Square,
Bid your inmost hearts rejoice!
On the balmy summer air,
As of old, the Prophet's voice,
Preaches in God's Wilderness
The Brotherhood of Man — and peace.

And, upon this natal day
Of Christ's herald, our St. John,
Let our hearts be glad, be gay,
That the Cause he preached moves on!

All Lands where the sun doth shine
Pour the sacramental wine.

Never more shall earth-born kings
  Make our hearts to quake with fear;
Time, with healing on his wings,
  Brings the day of triumph near,
Deliverance we need not pray
From fate like that of James Molay.

But in our most luxurious feasts
  Garnished with wealth's sensuous ease,
Remember, that with skins of beasts
  St. John was girded, and for these
Scant fruits, such as wilds provide,
Thanked God, and was satisfied.

THE PROLETARIAT.

In the wastes of the oldest desert
  There sit on a sand-draped throne
The crystalled wisdom of centuries,
  The lessons of Time, in stone.

Set in the verdureless sand-drifts,
  Carved on the changeless gloom
Of a long-dead civilization,
  Are a statue and a tomb.

The statue with brow of the poet
  And face of the soldier and sage,
Necked to the brawny shoulders
  Of a beast that survives his cage.

The tomb left back and behind it
As in scorn of a trivial thing —
The ancients had wrought a sepulcher
To mock the dust of a king.

And these are rock-wrought stories
Carved by hands that were schooled
To write with enduring chisel
The tale of the Ruler and Ruled.

The Ruled! O, Proletariat,
Ye are the tree and the root
With hold upon earth's foundations,
Man-head, with the body of brute.

Man-head on the brute's strong body,
To endure, to dare, to strive;
The type of humanity's tenure,
The fittest thing to survive!

Fret not the air with a murmur,
Raise not a petulant cry,
Ye are the tree of eternity
Never to blossom, nor die.

The king with his soft-limbed nobles,
They are the fruit and the flower,
Blowing in air but a moment,
Blowing away in an hour.

The winds will scatter the blossoms,
And the fruit at a blast is spilled
And blown into mould'ring silence,
But the strong tree is not killed.

For the budding of civilizations
Have been the things of a breath,
The flares of a transient blossoming
For the frosts of an early death.

The flower puts forth no blossom,
The fruit produces no fruit;
The Man-head erect and eternal
Must crown the strength of the brute.

Poet springs not from poet,
No son of a warrior may dare
To wield the sword of his father,
Greatness hath never an heir.

One sings with the earth to hearken;
One strikes for the wrongs of all;
Never on Son of Elijah
May Elijah's mantle fall.

CRUELLY KIND.

My children shall be children
While I may keep them so;
My childhood road had many a goad,
And a thorny way to go,
And I missed the priceless treasure
That poets are singing to-day,
The heaping measure of childish pleasure,
Found but in childish play.

But still there is a danger
That haunts and haunts my mind,
A shadowy thing, no poets sing,
Of being cruelly kind;
And yet, and yet there lingers
A legion of growing qualms,
Have I given them delicate fingers
And their need is for horny palms?

It may be that my childhood,
Though toilsome, irksome, bare,
Was needed drill that gave me skill
And courage to do and dare.
"Your captain has shirked his duty,"
To my little soldiers, I say,
"Put by your fun and shoulder a gun,
I must drill you a while to-day."

JOHN CLARK RIDPATH.

ON THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF HIS BIRTH, APRIL 26, 1891.

I look adown the slanted way
Up which, unseen of men, at first,
You toiled, impelled by that keen thirst
Success alone can quite allay —
The nectar of a deathless name
Held in the grudging cup of Fame.

And then, I cloudward arch my eyes,
And strike my hands in quick applause,
Each step your upward sandal draws,
Reveals some new discovered prize;
Some fresh and various trophy for
The author, poet, orator.

Through you I gain new faith in clay;
I lose old dread of titles, wealth;
I see fresh signs of sturdy health
In veins of common life that lay
The polished surface far below,
Down to the *Demos Krateco.*

And while this newer faith I gain,
And while I lose this olden dread
Almost I feel that *I* am led
Up steeps, I else assayed in vain,
To every shining deed that draws
My ringing measures of applause.

SONGS OF THE AFFECTIONS.

IRENE.

Irene of Sherman, keep for me
  The honied sweetness of thy smile,
And let thy voice melodious be
  With words that may my heart beguile ;
And let the softness of thy cheek,
  The melting darkness of thine eye,
The trembling of thy red lips speak
  The tender language of love's sigh !

Irene of Sherman, in my palm
  Has grown the pressure of thy hand.
My heart roused from its peaceful calm
  Throbs like some storm-wave on its strand.
O, lay my head on thy white breast,
  Place thy soft hand within my own,
And love, O, let me dream and rest
  Veiled in thy brown hair, summer-blown !

SECRET LOVE.

Stolen waters are the sweetest,
Secret love is aye completest ;
One, the Arab legends say,
One was taught me yesterday.

Love is best that thrives unbidden;
Love is blest if harshly chidden;
So, the rarest flower grows
In perpetual edge of snows.

Secret love abides the longer;
Persecuted, love is stronger;
Gives the world too swift assent,
Then is love but half content.

RELINQUO.

Let me never see thy face,
  Since it wears for me no more
That enchanting look of grace
  Once for me alone it wore.

Let me never hear thy voice;
  Love no longer molds its tone.
Once it bade my heart rejoice
  With a gladness all my own.

Let me never touch thy palm;
  Once it clung within my clasp.
Now 'twould chill me, cold and calm
  In my own too fervid grasp.

Let me never see thine eyes
  Looking up into my own;
Deep within their darkness lies
  Danger I too well have known.

MY LADY GOOD.

Give me for comrade of my soul
The woman of such finer clay
As, mixed with something coarser, may
Still hold it in a sweet control.

With heart so large that it can take
Me in, and only take me in,
My virtues, and, ah me! my sin,
And will not cast me out, nor break;

But holds my evil with my good,
And chiding gently as a friend
For faults my nature may not mend,
Believes or hopes whate'er I would.

I ask not of her hair or eyes,
Or curve of lip or bloom of cheek;
Thy heart, sweetheart, shall sing and speak
And bloom long after beauty dies.

Give me such comrade for my wife,
My armor-bearer and my mate,
And I can break a lance with Fate
Upon the utmost edge of life.

ITA.

Let me love on! Wake me, no rude awaking,
From this dear dream that clouds my day-lit eyes!
Lead my heart blinded to its final breaking,
Seeing the stark truth not that near me lies,

So near that I might strike it with the finger
That vaguely gropes to touch thy shrinking hand;
Still hide it from my heart and let me linger,
Chained sweetly to the spot where thou dost stand.

"Where thou didst stand," I shall say on the morrow
All hopelessly unto the reddening west,
With wide eyes, glittering in tearless sorrow,
Held ever to the spot that holds thee best;
Where thou wilt laugh and sing and greet with gladness
Thy friends as I have seen thee do sometimes;
Nor on thy heart fall shadow of that sadness
Far lengthened from this darkened day of mine.

LICHTENSTEIN.

O, YOU AND I may only meet
When spray of nightfall from above
Down drips and drapes us to the feet
In shadowy dews of love.

And you and I must sigh and speak
The while the gray bat darkly skims
Deep pools of sky that soundless break
'Round netted isles of limbs.

And we must wrench our hands away
When first along the east are tossed
The flickering torches of the day—
Pale seekers of the Lost.

TEMPUS FUGIT.

The darkening days so quickly pass;
The winter's winds more keenly blow;
The green on yester's wayside grass
To-day is pallid in the snow.

My cares fall thicker, like the snows;
Light burdens drift a weary load;
Each year Fate's hedge that higher grows,
Casts deeper shadows on my road.

VOLO.

I would that my heart were dumb,
So dumb that it could not speak
Its tale of love — that when you come
Is told in my flushing cheek.

I would that my heart were hard,
So hard that it could not feel
Pain for the grass blade on the sward,
Bruised by your careless heel.

I would that my heart were deaf,
So deaf that it could not hear
The fainting breath of a new-born grief,
Thy breast in a sigh doth bear.

I would that my heart were blind,
So blind that it could not see
The links of chain that must sometime bind
Thee and thy fate to me.

PARTING.

The saddened gray of the sky,
The colder gray of the river,
As you voiced the last good-bye,
Grew fast in my heart, forever.

The touch that you gave my hand
Chilled my soul in the giving,
As the fierce wind dashed to the sand
Dead leaves, that but now, were living.

Your kiss fell light on my cheek,
While, O, my lips were yearning,
And the words I dared not speak
Down in my heart were burning.

A LOVE DITTY.

"Stolen waters are the sweetest,
Secret love is aye completest;"
This I whispered o'er again,
Riding in the rain.

Bright to me as summer day
Are the rainclouds dripping gray;
Summer suns shine but in vain,
Come once more, sweet rain!

Rainclouds have a silver lining,
Brighter than the day-god's shining;
Golden noon-beams lure in vain,
Love rides in the rain.

WAITING.

She sits in the shadow of the evening gray,
  Beside the darkening door,
Where the maples have made a carpet too gay
  And too rich for a royal floor.
Her soft, pale cheek is in her hand,
  And her book is upon her knee;
And her thoughts are away, in a distant land,
Where the light waves laugh on a golden strand,
  Beside the great, lone sea.

Where the gold lieth hid in the mountain caves,
  Awaiting the seeker's eye,
And pearls gleam out from the limpid waves
  Like stars in a summer sky.
But brighter than gold is every curl
  In the wealth of her shining hair,
And brighter far than the dearest pearl
In the coronet, proud, of duke or earl
  Is the gleam of her teeth, so rare.

The sun is down, and the fading light,
  Like smiles on a dying face,
And the cricket's chant, like the voice of night,
  Is droning in every place;
And a cry comes up from her lonely heart,
  As when the wild wood-dove grieves;
And the tears that out of her blue eyes start
Fall glittering down, and lie apart,
  Like the dew on the withered leaves.

LONGING.

"Could I, with eager reverential hand
For one brief, happy moment, lift the curtain
That in mysterious distance, dark, uncertain,
Hangs on the world-ward edge of Angel-land,

"And see — (If mortal eyes may bear God's day,)
'Mid blossoms brighter than our earthly flowers,
Through all the sunny, careless, happy hours,
Two pretty children — my dear babes at play.

"Of all heaven's brightest jewels, could I see
Those eyes in which no dews of sorrow glisten;
Of all angelic music, could I listen
To those sweet baby voices calling me,

"I could take up the burdens of my life,
That are of late too heavy and have crushed
My soul into the dust; my murmuring hushed,
I could so joyfully renew the strife."

FATED.

In yon sad leaden sky there is no weariness
Like that which shrouds your life and mine in gloom.
In yon low hanging clouds there droops no dreariness,
Like that which drags us downward to our doom.

And you bleak winter-wood, stark, gaunt and hoary,
Stilled with great grief for withered leaves and flowers;
Holds not less hope of its lost summer glory,
Than do these leafless, bloomless hearts of ours.

LOVE SONG.

Let me tell you while I may,
Though my locks are whitening,
Love can show his warmest ray
All our pathway brightening.

"Love me little, love me long!"
This my motto, never;
Love and I are hale and strong,
And so shall be forever.

Though I clasp thee not so tight
As in years long vanished,
Yet one hour from thy sight
I am with the banished.

Let me tell thee while I may,
Love's rose-rays are shining
While our locks are growing gray:
We are not repining.

A PAINTING.

Paint me a painting, Walter Sies,
Such as a Hoosier boy can paint,
Bright with tints of our wondrous skies,
Shaded from dim woods pale and faint.

Cleanse your pallette up to its best,
Dot it with colors fresh and new;
I want a red sun in the west,
Flanked by a bank of somber hue.

Leaves? O, no, I want no leaves;
Only the *dead* leaves shrinking down
Into the stillness of their graves
In soundless hollows, damp and brown.

Look, look, my Walter; "line" your eye
Beside my outstretched arm; now, hold!
Note yon far trees that lace the sky
Like spider-webs on molten gold!

Ah, well, one damp December day
I watched a blood-red sun die out
And leave that sky so old and gray
It seemed the shroud of ancient doubt.

My baby-boy, with yellow hair
And black eyes deep as yon dark wood;
Hugging him to my crushed heart, there
Where you are standing now, I stood,

And saw his life with the sun depart;
And darkening, then, yon tall wood's shade
Crept unheeded upon my heart,
Covered it over and grew and stayed.

Sometime, somewhere in the coming day,
When miles and miles between us lie,
I 'll see in this painting, damp and gray,
The drip of that dreary winter sky.

So, Walter, my Walter, do your best;
Show me what a Hoosier boy can do!
I want a red sun in the west
Flanked by a bank of somber hue.

THE DAY OF THE DEAD.

The Day of the Nation's weeping
At the feet of her soldier dead;
The years have been steadily creeping
In winding paths that have led
To a rite of a broader meaning
Than a pageant of war that waves
Its banners and slant arms leaning
O'er nothing but warrior graves.

I follow no flaunting banner,
I step to no throb of a drum;
I take not the martial manner
Of armèd ranks that come
From streets of the crowded city
In waving, glittering lines,
To the lowly mounds of our pity
'Neath the pall of the sighing pines.

But I walk with arms that are folded
Over my burdened breast,
And the print of my feet is moulded
In the dust of my soul's unrest.
I gather no gaudy garland
Of rose nor lily nor vine;
For the meadows of memory's starland
Are dotted with dandelion.

I carry these humble flowers
Because they were loved of my dead,
Blossoms for all of the hours
That flew o'er each infantile head.

Recalling the strange, sage prattle
Of these little soldiers of mine,
Who fell in the edge of the battle
On Babyhood's skirmish line;

Strange words that fell as the thunder
That falls from a cloudless sky,
That left me dumb with wonder
Till I saw them all pulseless lie.
Then I knew two angels of God that day
Flew from my yearning sight;
They had walked with me but a little way,
They had tarried with me but a night.

A little way they had guarded
My soul from the enemy's dart,
A night they had watched and warded
The world from my helpless heart,
With the strength of the strange, sage prattle
Of these two little soldiers of mine,
Who fell in the edge of the battle—
On Babyhood's skirmish line.

And, I think, I should have been stronger
To have walked unscathed from the field
Of my strife, if a few years longer
They had covered me with their shield.
And so in the May's last hours
I walked with sorrowful tread,
Bearing my golden flowers—
The debt that I owe to my dead.

MID-LIFE.

My brother, let me feel thy palm,
  Hard-pressed against my own,
In this first battle with the world,
  We are not overthrown;
We lie upon our arms to-night,
  Miles front of where we lay
And wait with eager confidence
  The coming of the day.

We've counted up the meager spoil
  Of this hard-foughten field;
Some banners, guns and fortresses,
  Fate is compelled to yield.
We paused to bury, too, our dead,
  Our best loved dead that fell,
Our hearts are their own monuments—
  No doubt they 're sleeping well.

My brother, ere the morning star
  Above the east hills shine,
We will have belted on our swords
  And formed anew our line.
To-morrow is a fateful day;
  Which way shall go the strife?
It is the final battle eve
  Before the night of life.

What then, could we go satisfied,
  Into the shadow land,
If, on the battle's farther edge
  We stayed our conqu'ring hand?

My brother, let me feel thy palm,
  Hard-pressed against my own;
Go we together to the fight,
  We cannot be overthrown.

WHEN THY DEAR HAND—

When thy dear hand I grasp,
  A wild, magnetic thrill
  Makes my heart-chords trill.
My all I clasp when thy dear hand I grasp.

When thy soft lips I press
  In one long kiss, I seem
  In an ecstatic dream.
Thy fond caress melts into blissfulness.

When thy light slumbers break,
  From off my drowsy eyes
  The sleep-god lightly flies.
I, too, awake, when thy light slumbers break.

SONGS OF WAR AND PEACE.

THE REBEL YELL.

The thirsty rays of the July sun
Drank the breath of the summer morning
Over Utah fitfully blown
From ponderous mountain lips of stone
That seemed, in grim prophetic warning,
Curled in a vast and massive scorning,
As if the roar of the morning gun,
The faint, far crackle of distant rifles,
Were part of a sum of mortal trifles.

Then woke Deseret's mountain men
At sound of an old familiar thunder;
Woke with a quick heart-leap, again
Drew their brows in listening wonder,
With eyes of warriors gleaming under;
For these were the soldiers of the South
Drifted away on the wreck of battle
To this far mountain isle of drouth—
Listening now to the pulsing rattle
Of rifle volleys, while memory taxing
In half-awakening explanation—
"Ha!" they said, their brows relaxing,
"This is the birthday of our Nation,
The common day of American glory;
How will the Mormon render the story?"

Then some from Stonewall's old brigade,
And some from the noted Hampton Legion,
And some from the Black Horse cavalcade,
And more from a far less famous region—
The men that followed Old Pap Price
From early trials of Cow Skin Prairie
In and out of Missouri twice—
Followed their leader, bold and wary,
On to the final and sure disaster;
As men have never followed a master,
As men go anywhere, hand and glove,
Even to death, with the leader they love:—
These men questioning thus, and replying,
Looked from their cityward windows all,
Beheld the dome of the city hall
And the Stars and Stripes at *half-mast* flying.

As with one impulse, down to the street
From many a window disappearing,
Every obstacle leaping and clearing,
With old-time rush of the charging feet,
Toward the town hall, they thundering hurried,
Where Mormon chiefs sat flushed and flurried.
"Run up the flag!" the foremost cried,
With voice like the roar of a joining battle;
"Up to the top!" And those at his side
Echoed his cry as the pattering rattle
Of a full brigade when it "orders arms,"
Or a regiment firing a single volley.

The Mormons answered: "What wild folly,
Men of the South—and after the harms
That came to you from this striped rag,

Tainting you still with the smell of treason.
This is never your blue-crossed flag;
How flies your courage, how fails your reason!"
And then the soldier spokesman rose
As if he rose in a ringing stirrup,
Over the cowering heads of foes
The while his strong steed sprang at a chirrup:
"Not yet was it treason when *we* flew
To arms for a question vexed and nettled
From times of the Colonies on and through
To Appomattox—*but there it was settled.*"
Pausing, he knitted his grizzled brow,
And with a glance that seemed to sever
The hearts of the men at the lowered bunting
Whilst he for the strongest phrases hunting,
Shouted: "To *us* it is treason now,
From Appomattox on and forever.
Run up our flag! We give you one minute,
Not to consider it, but to begin it."

Then when a dozen of shaking hands
Swiftly drew on the rising pulley,
Till, soaring up on its sea-grass strands,
The bright silk flag, unfolding fully,
Floated high in a sun-flood gleaming;
There sprang from hundreds of soldiers' throats
A shrill fierce cry like eagles screaming.
Out on the morning breeze it floats,
On, to the cabin sides of the mountains
Hushing the murmurs of winds and fountains;
Men leaped up wherever it fell,
Catching it up like a song forgotten,
Filled the air with the rebel yell,

The lost war-cry of the land of cotton,
Till all the resonant fibers of pines,
Every power of sound enlarging,
Rang with a thrill of a shout that never
Sprang from aught but the terrible lines
Of the dauntless gray-men fiercely charging;
Echoed it back from the mountain's brow,
From tallest pines and stunted sages,
A shout that shall echo through future ages—
"To lower the flag is treason *now*,
From Appomattox on and forever."

GRANDMOTHER NEWCOME:

A FOURTH OF JULY EPISODE.

Grandmother Newcome, of Illinois,
Known to hosts of the "army boys"
For numberless deeds of kindness done,
Though widowed at bloody Donelson,
She took far more than her husband's place
In the conquering march of the loyal blue,
In deeds of mercy and motherly grace—
To the blue-coat first, but the gray-coat, too.

Grandmother Newcome, of Effingham,
That July day when the great boats swam
At the foot of Vicksburg's yellow bluff;
When the Stars and Bars had fluttered low,
And the Stars and Stripes were fluttering high,
And for one day there was glory enough—
Mother Newcome, out of the glow

Of jubilant triumph, heard the cry
Of one of her wounded soldier boys:
"Take me back to my Illinois!
Take me back to my home to die!"

Onward swinging the huge boat's prow,
Slowly swinging a moment more
Had left the agonized boy ashore,
In all the frenzy of wild despair,
To die in this far, hot land of sands,
And his cool, green prairies even now
Stretching their myriad healing hands
To gather and shelter and heal him there.

"No soldier can come aboard this boat!"
Hoarsely its sullen officer said,
In a growl from the depths of his bearded throat,
With an angry shake of his vicious head;
"Dying or living, you stay ashore!
We have our load and we 'll take no more!"
And at his beckon the long stage-plank
Slowly rose from the sandy bank,
And rending the air with a pitiful moan
The sick man sank to the ground like a stone.

How she did it nobody knew,
And nobody knew it less than she,
But right in face of the wond'ring crew,
Right in the teeth of the angry mate,
As the plank came up, she walked elate,
Bearing the wounded boy, somehow,
In a burst of indignant ecstacy,
O'er teetering plank safe onto the bow
Into the midst of the cheering crew.

"There!" she said, as she laid him down
And facing the mate with threatening frown,
"You throw him out and you'll throw me too!"

Cheer after cheer went up from the bank,
Cheers from the boats, crew after crew,
As the great boat slowly hauling its plank
Northward into the channel drew.
There were happy visions of prairies bright,
Happy visions for one of the boys
Taking his hopeful, homeward flight
Under the more than motherly care
Of the Dorian matron standing there,
Grandmother Newcome, of Illinois.

LET US HAVE PEACE.

"Let us have peace!" the captain said,
And over the war-stained land
The dews of a new content were shed,
Like rain on the desert sand;
And women lifted streaming eyes
To a light that broke in leaden skies.

"Let us have peace!" No idle word
The great commander spake,
And many the straining ears that heard
His lips the silence break.
He gave his foes a princely lease,
He healed the past with balmy peace.

"Let us have peace!" he spake again,
When men of a meaner mold
Had riveted shackle, bar and chain,
And closing the donjon hold
Were seeking to bring the law's worst woes
On bended heads of beaten foes.

"Let us have peace!" and prison bars
Burst at the simple phrase;
The world stood still; and changeless stars
Leant from their shining ways
And listened to words that seem so tame,
And yet are the mightiest lips can frame.

"Let us have peace!" Can any ask
Which was his mightiest deed?
Though memory hold this after-task
As worthy of little heed,
The voice of the coming time will call
This phrase, this deed the best of all.

In this last war that he must wage,
This battle of glooms sublime
Proves him the hand of our hurtling age,
The heart of our stirring time.
Wherever his funeral cortege goes
Is the love and the grief of former foes.

"Let us have peace!" "May he have peace!"
Is the prayer and the song that 's sung
From Manitoba to the isles of Greece,
Wherever the Saxon tongue
Can murmur, in any rippling air,
"He won all praise; he needs no prayer."

KIRKHAM OF GEORGIA.

Not all the chivalry of the world
Went out with the helmet and coat of mail.
He who can stand in the leaden hail,
Where hissing bolts of battle are hurled
And the air is full of the awful roar
That blows from the bellowing cannon's jaws,
And earth is sodden with human gore—
The dearest blood of brother or friend;—
The man who finds in his heart to bend
In an hour like that, to a fallen foe,
Is one that the wide, wide world should know—
A man framed after some antique plan,
Upheld by a loftier code of laws,
Wherein is written that maxim true,
"The bravest man is the kindest, too!"
For courage *and* kindness make the man.

Kirkham of Georgia stood that day
Where Sherman's resolute regiments rushed
Up to the flaming parapet's edge,
Their rifles agleam like an icy hedge;
An icy hedge that melted away
In the red-hot flame of the battle-blaze,
And thunderous blows of the cannon brushed
And blew them away to the distant wood;
And there they rallied, and turned and stood,
Hid in the war-cloud's sheltering haze.

Over the bayonet-bristled wall
Kirkham of Georgia heard the call

Of a thousand wounded fellow-men.
Only a flitting moment ago
Each was his menacing mortal foe!
Soldierly fellows they were, he knew;
Every man of them tried and true,
For he had seen their keen eyes set
Behind each glittering bayonet,
In that all-perilous moment, when,
Like waves on a rock-bound coast they dashed,
And every log of the breast-work splashed
With crimson spray of the battle-gore!

Foes of his they were, now, no more!
But fellow-soldiers perishing there,
Shrivelled with that insatiate thirst,
That strange phenomenon of a wound—
That thirst like the drouth of a soul in hell.
It shrieked and shivered in all the air,
It groaned and writhed on parching ground.
"Water! For God's sake, water!" the first
And the last and the burden of every cry:
"Give me water, or I must die!"
Kirkham listened and held his breath;
Then turned to his Captain, standing by,
Where men drew water from out a well
And filled from barrels the cool canteens.

"Captain! listen! You hear that cry?
You know what torture that wild cry means;
I've felt that thirst; nor can I stand
That cry for water; let me go
With canteens filled to the overflow;
Although I go perhaps to my death."

The grim, old officer waved his hand;
"You're one of my bravest soldiers, I know;
Go on — to your death, if it must be so.
A deed so kindly, and too, so bold,
Stirs my heart like a tale of old!
Comrades! we lack but the Table Round!
The knightly soul for its head, is found."

Then canteen-laden and powder-grimed
Kirkham over the breast-work climbed,
In storms of bullets from out the wood,
Where legions of keen-eyed enemies stood.
And showers of bullets about him poured,
And even the cannon leap'd and roared.

But the shriek of a shell or a minie-ball
Could never so loyal a soul appall.
And while the war-storm swept the air,
Kirkham bended him here and there,
Nor thought of the danger, nor stopped to think,
But lavishly poured the blessed drink.
Down parching throats, o'er blood-stained lips,
This cooling dew of the heavens slips,
And every moistened and loosened tongue
Changed the tune of the song it sung:

"God bless you, Johnny! God bless you, Reb!
Your jacket is wrong, but your heart is right!
No bullet can strike you out of this fight!
Fate can not weave you into her web!
God bless you, Johnny! God bless you, Reb!
The water sinks to its lowest ebb;
And still, there are burning lips that wait.
Go on! Go on! There is no fate

Can harm one hair of your manly head!"
And Kirkham cheerily leap'd and ran
Wherever a thirst cry him might lead;
Back and forth in the battle-field.
Fate held before him a shining shield;
Fit shield, no doubt, for a shining deed!
For foemen, down in the sheltering wood
Let fall to the ground the rifle-breech;
Came forth from each lurking place and stood
And saw and admired, as brave foes can,
The splendid chivalry of the man.
And murmurs grew into phraséd speech;
And phrases into a ringing cheer,
A chorus of plaudits, loud and clear,
That rose and fell, again and again,
The *laudamus* of the battle-plain.

O! that was a moment for manly pride!
The mighty armies of either side,
Pausing, awhile, from the work of death
To voice one eloquent, glorying breath,
In words that an echoing world must heed
And mark forever a chivalric deed.

TAKE THEM IN.

Take them in, as ye took them back,
After the work of war was done,
On not one field that they lost or won,
Hath wheel of a cannon left a track;
But riven splinters of peaceful stone,
Mark those fields of our strife, alone.

And every river, and every wood
And every sentinel mountain-peak
That saw the great guns leap and speak,
Where foeman's bayonets stormed or stood,
Have washed their faces clean of their sin,
And watch and wait till you take them in.

Many, so many, Ah, far the more,
Have gone from the ways of sound and sight;
Ye may not lift their hearts with a rite;
They wear, forever, the gray they wore.
But are there not, now, badges of blue,
For living breasts that are brave and true?

The grandest of armies' grandest day
When magnanimity's crowning deed
Your ceremonial rites shall lead
The rapidly thinning ranks of the gray;
The grandest army under the sun,
When American Armies *both* are *one*.

And this, I think, is a debt that you owe;
You had not been, were it not for *them*;
Do not your roses of glory grow
Out of *their* sad, gray lily's stem?
What of your valor's splendid sheen,
If that of your foemen's had not been?

It took both armies, it took us all,
To make this episode of our time
The grandest far, and the most sublime
That could to the lot of a Nation fall.
Ye, still, have one more battle to win,
We watch and wait to be taken in.

WHITTIER.

Brave poet, of the plaintive lure
With plektron of Parnassian pine,
Rent by the flash of fire divine,
Emotion's lightning, white and pure.

'Twas thine to sing the stirring song,
The battle-hymn of earth's oppressed;
To hold within thine ample breast,
Indignant hatred of all wrong.

'Twas thine to greet with warm applause,
The single champion of the right,
While yet he fought a hopeless fight
Against the wind-mills of the laws.

'Twas thine to teach the Higher Law
Than any stamped in statute-book;
The law that world-old shackles shook
And rent away as strands of straw.

That Higher Law that stands above
The tallest growth of selfish greed;
That holds creation in its creed —
God's Higher Law of boundless Love.

That Higher Law that holds appeal
From every man-made "Court below"
Where Conscience sits, the truth to know;
Decides the universal weal.

I cannot deem thee with the dead;
To me thou art as strong with life
As when the lists of lettered strife
Shook 'neath thy metered tread.

Nor yet while there be right and wrong
Shall one keen etching of thy pen
Fade from the memories of men,
Nor cease to touch the chords of song.

Till universal liberty
Shall raise to heaven her torchéd lights
Of equal justice; equal rights—
Equality, fraternity.

THE UNDERHOLT.

No warrior mediæval wrought,
Or ancient, can with him compare
Who in the battle smoke-fog fought
The screaming iron of the air.

I hold that he who armored rode
The iron steed to spring and prance;
Who bore a shield against a lance,
Or forth to single combat strode;

Or crossed a petty, rattling sword,
Or deftly dodged a cross-bow-bolt;
Or singly slew a savage horde—
Had, on our times, "the underholt."

How would his cheek have blanched with fear,
His vaunted valor taken wing,
If, in full chorus, he should hear
A thousand minie-bullets sing!

Would Richard show the warrior joy
That hunted Richmond with a smile,
If knowing that some slender boy
Might pick him off at half-a-mile?

Would Cæsar grasp his Roman blade
And rush where Cimbrian torrent poured,
If rifled cannon flamed and roared,
Or canister the dead-gaps made?

I say it humbly — without boast —
A boy, and with my "Winchester,"
I would have made a common ghost
Of him who drew "Excalibur."

Sing not of him who rattled sword
Or deftly dodged a cross-bow-bolt;
Upon a common soldier's word,
That fellow had "the underholt."

WHO LED?

[To the unknown Confederate dead who lie in the potter's field, I dedicate this sentiment, which is applicable to the unknown dead of both armies, who died prisoners of war.]

Not in the wrath of battle
These few invaders came.
No volleying rifle's rattle,
No cannon's shotted flame
Blew death's red blast before them,
Over our river's flow;
No war-flag floated o'er them,
Fierce menace to a foe.

With drooping head
And faltering tread,
They followed feebly where men led
The wounded captive to his bed.

Was this their creed,
To follow where men lead?
Let the late truth be said
These were the men who led,
On every field of terror
Where battle ranks were closed
These breasts were interposed.

How grew this stalwart error
That these, whose foremost tread
Pressed, first, the red grass, sodden,
The battle edge untrodden,
These leaders, were the led?
Out on such idle prattle!
These breasts that wore no rank
Were those that foremost drank
The first red draught of battle.
These unknown dead
Are they who led.

For these there are no flowers,
No honied hint of May;
In all the coming hours
No human lip shall say:
"Where these long grasses wave,
Is made my father's grave."
Or, "Here my brother lies,
Each under alien skies."

Was not that courage highest,
Approaching ideal nighest,
That needed no outer goad
To drive it on the road
Of duty and of danger?
The homeless, nameless stranger
Who clasped the cannon rammer;
Or grasped the rifle breech
Heard no applauding clamor.

No sweet, approving speech
Of those who knew or loved him;
Alone the fire that moved him,
Burned in his heart.
He was a part
Of all the great and good.
Ah, well he could
Afford to die alone,
And lie unknown.
Time's utmost reach
Shall surely teach
It was the ranks that led —
Our Unknown Dead.

THE GUERRILLA.

Low wails the wind in the thicket,
Whirling the brown, crisp leaves;
Dolefully chirrups the cricket;
His web the grey spider weaves.

Close to the earth, in dark masses,
Hurries the winter-cloud on;
Somber and gloomy it passes—
Passes, but never is gone.

What is the thing that the raven
Flaps with his ominous wings?
'Twixt the bleak earth and black heaven,
Slow in the chill wind it swings.

Ghastly, distorted and bloated;
Livid lips swollen and blue;
Dark, curling hair damply coated,
Dripping with yester-night's dew.

Eyes from their sockets starting;
Hands in the death-struggle wrung;
And through the jaws, wide parting,
Black lolls the swollen tongue.

Down come the patt'ring raindrops,
Ceases the cricket's dirge now;
Wild shrieks the wind in the tree-tops;
Creaks the cord on the bough.

OUR DEAD.

The warm breath of the Carolines
Blows softly on our Northern woods;
Unlocks our winter-prisoned floods
From the far regions of the pines.

And at its touch thy bare, brown breast,
O, mother earth, thrills through and through,
And blushes crimson, veined with blue,
Reflected from thy blossoming crest.

And now, where the domain of Spring
O'erlaps the edge of Summer land;
The Nation comes, with gentle hand
The year's first offering to bring.

And place, with proudly sorrowing heart,
Above the kindly tended graves
That hold the ashes of our braves,
O, mourner, this thy loving part.

Bring, first, the scarlet pimpernel,
To symbolize the blood they shed;
Freedom hath been baptized in red
E'er since the world's first tyrant fell.

Bring lilies, while they sweetly blow—
The spotless purity of white
Should ever be the badge of right;
Hills nearest heaven do whitest glow.

And blue-bells from the forest call;
Friendship, is of itself, divine;
And blue, its universal sign,
God bounteously spreads over all.

And those, who, with short vision, knew
The narrow State's cramped realty
As measure of their fealty,
And fierce rebellion's red sword drew;

Find, in a mild and lenient law,
Those who could conquer can forgive;
A broader liberty doth live
E'en than the Pilgrim Fathers saw.

Nor guillotine, nor walled bastile,
Gloomed down upon their overthrow;
Vengeance upon a fallen foe,
The truly brave can never feel.

The proudest victory that lights
The dark page of war's history:
Columbia bade her foes go free,
Re-clothed in all their forfeit rights.

Nor sleep less sound her gallant dead,
That mercy reached their foemen's host,
'T will be our future's proudest boast,
No vengeful drop of blood was shed.

FORT VINCENNES.

AN EPISODE OF 1778.

In the heat of a summer Sunday noon,
Fresh with the healthy breath of June,

That waved the canes in the marshy fens
That flanked thy sand redout, Vincennes,

Cooled by the shade of a spreading elm,
With pipe in hand, sat Captain Helm.

For old Joe Helm and his squad of one
That day were Vincennes' garrison.

A musket and a sand-scoured spade
Together leant on the palisade,

As if, like Captain Helm, they knew
'T was noon of a summer Sunday, too.

High over his head a dirty roll
Of bunting hung from a hickory pole,

And a breath of wind from the green cane-brake
Revealed in its field a rattle-snake.

A single sentry, lank and tall,
With arms at a shoulder, paced the wall.

Said old Joe, rising up to his feet,
"Comrade, 't is time thou drink and eat,

And that thy duty be not too hard
The next two hours I shall mount guard.

But hark thee, comrade, thy meal soon done,
I pray thee take thy accordion

And play me thy bravest marches yet,
That my legs their stiffness may forget;

And draw not thy bellows out so far
As to have no wind at the first of a bar,

For I love to strike my left foot down
When I march, to a tune of a swinging sound;

And mind that thy fingers strike the keys
With confidence, that there be no wheeze,

But let it come as if every note
Were shot right out of a cannon's throat;

And let the bass keys open stand —
'T will make thy bellows a full brass band."

A twinkle gleamed in old Joe's eye,
As it peeped from its wrinkled corner sly,

A flitting pucker along the lip
That almost let a grim laugh slip;

And he smartly shouldered his heavy gun,
As if he said, "I must have my fun."

The accordion bellows did puff and blow
High over Wabash's rippled flow.

The thunder-pumpers from out the marsh
Threw in some bass notes loud and harsh,

And the grizzled captain stepped in time
To an air that never was set to rhyme;

While up the river but half-a-mile
Were forming in battle, rank and file,

As they sprang from wide batteau and barge,
A thousand soldiers of English George.

Then Governor Hamilton raised his hand,
Saying, "Hark! these rebels have a band

Of martial music! That speaks, egad,
Of a mightier force than I deemed they had!

Another tune they soon shall sing;
Go summon them in the name of the King!"

So, close in the edge of the shady wood,
With horn to his lips, the bugler stood;

He stood, but stayed both lip and hand
For pause in the crash of the martial band.

But still the screaming accordion,
In equal volume, roared on and on;

But there came a period, by and by,
In a burst of musical ecstasy,

The very mishap, in fact, befell
That erst the Captain did foretell.

Heedlessly pushed on a long half-note,
The bellows collapsed with a wheeze in its throat.

"They've made an end o' that tune at last,"
The bugler muttered, and blew his blast.

On the sand-wall backing the palisade,
The quondam sentry "about face" made;

Brought down his piece with a soldierly air
And fiercely he shouted: "Who goes there?"

The answer came with hardly a pause:
"Five hundred brave Indian Ottawas,

And if these are not enough, why then
They are led by as many Englishmen!"

Then Captain Helm, from his sentry beat,
Up the river beholds the fleet

Of armèd barges and broad batteaux;
One questioning glance around he throws.

He sees in a long unbroken line
A circle of glittering bayonets shine;

And he speaks: "I yield not till I know
On what fair terms I forth may go."

Then eagerly Governor Hamilton:
"If ye will out of the land be gone,

And as no blood is spilt thus far,
Ye shall march out with Honors of War."

'T was good as a circus to hear Joe laugh
As he told how the English General's staff

Foamed and shouted and spurred and drew
Their lines in the martial avenue,

Through which he must march at tap of drum.
The gate swung back: "They come, they come!"

Ran in a half-spoke murmur low
Down the enemy's lines, and — out came Joe,

With sword at "carry" and uniform on,
And his one man playing the accordion.

Governor Hamilton loved a joke;
Though this was on him, he laughing, spoke

To his staff, who down from their saddles leant,
And pointing to Helm's queer instrument:

"I 've often heard it, but now I know
How much may be done by a vigorous blow."

THE LEGEND OF HOOSIER SLIDE.

I found it on a pebbly strand,
Half-hidden in the silver sand
Of storm-washed shore of Michigan.

Ice-locked, or afloat it had idly lain
In winter's snow and summer's rain,
Until the waters had stamped the stain

Of the deepest mid-lake's purple blue,
The grain of the tough wood through and through
Stained with the water's purple hue;

And 't was given to me, untaught, to know
That this was the fragment of a bow
Once the weapon of the Sachem Lo!

So I took in my hand the bit of wood,
Hewed from the ash tree tough and good,
That a thousand years ago had stood

On the shore of this northern inland sea;
And I said: "O, water-sprite, tell to me
This storm-tossed weapon's history."

And out of the waves there came a sound
That the roar of the breakers might not drown,
And the pines let fall their brown cones down;

And it cried: "'T is some ten thousand moons
Since these broad prairies thou look'st upon
Were as this lake—but vast lagoons
Southward and west to the setting sun;

And the eider-duck and the white swan rode
Where now your merchant navies ride,
And icthyosaurus had his abode
Where towers yon sand-mount, Hoosier Slide.

As I said, 't was a thousand years ago
That the bold young warrior Sachem Lo,
Hewed from the blue-ash tree this bow,

And wrapped it deftly about with thong
Made from the moose-deer's tendons, strong,
And he drew a shaft a cloth-yard long.

Far westward, where the dun deer play,
There lived a maiden as fair, they say,
As the very dawn of a summer day.

Her father, the goriest son of war
Whose breast e'er carried a battle-scar,
One spring day followed the war-path far

And fell on the tribe of the Sachem Lo,
And dealt it a fierce and deadly blow,
While its young men hunted the buffalo.

That night, when the northern lights burned blue,
The Sachem Lo, in his birch canoe,
Before the wind, like a sea-gull flew.

And while he flew as the sea-gulls fly,
Out of the darkness there came a cry
Of a soft voice hardened in agony.

And peering into the glooms of night,
He caught the gleam of an eye so bright
That his strong heart sprang with a strange delight.

Then vengeance fled from his burning breast,
As he snatched from the billows' foamy crest
The fairest blossom of all the West.

And she — Ah, white man, knowest thou well
What hearts in the breasts of the young do dwell?
How they loved at sight doth it need I tell?

And well I feel thou canst not know
How they loved who lived so long ago,
When love was no myth, nor life a show;

As turns the frightened sea-gull back,
When lightning flames from the storm cloud's rack,
The birch bark leaped on its homeward track.

O, well for them had there been no harm,
Save from the waters, the wind, the storm;
These yield to stout heart and strong arm.

But where the sky-black merged lake-blue,
Dashing the foam-edged darkness through,
There bounded many a long canoe.

And Daydawn knelt at her lover's feet,
And cheered him on with words so sweet
That the frail boat sprang like a courser fleet;

But O, it is vain that a single hand,
Though cunningest, strongest in the land,
Be matched with a fierce and numerous band.

Just where yon cedar stoopeth low,
The desperate Chieftain bent this bow,
While winged arrows like flakes of snow

Fell out of the dark. In his surer aim,
Keen as the lightning's vengeful flame,
Rode death on each shaft to his savage game.

And Daydawn! Did she hide her face,
And shriek as would one of thy pallid race?
Like a warrior's daughter she took her place,

And deftly the long, lithe paddle swung;
Like steel on the bark's hard sides it rung,
Till the boat thro' the white waves hummed and sung.

But now around them on every side
The enemy's boats like serpents glide,
Till each wave a foeman's bark doth ride.

Now prone in the prow of his gay canoe,
Pierced with one hundred arrows through,
The Sachem Lo his last breath drew.

And he smiled a lover's smile as he laid,
For the first and the last, his warrior head
To rest on the breast of the Indian maid.

Do you mark these sands that from the shore,
Where surges break and wild waves roar,
Fly upward ever and evermore?

And ever they spring from the water's edge,
And fleetly upward o'er crumbling ledge
Run nimbly through hazel-brake and hedge.

'T is the ghosts of the lovers that run and hide
When the north-wind rides on the rising tide,
And follows and bellows up Hoosier Slide."

ARE THEY NOT KNIGHTS?

[Read before an Association of Doctors.]

Are they not knights who thus take up
The gage of battle for God's poor,
And hold the shield of science broad
The meanest breast before?

Are they not knights who, hoping not
Reward of gold or fame's sweet breath,
In many a desperate tilt, unsung,
Repulse the robber Death?

Are they not knights who, with bared heads,
Confront the hosts of pestilence,
And when the Church anointed flees
Remain a sure defense?

For whom did knight of old break lance
But high-born dame or beauteous maid?
While for the maimed, the poor, obscure,
Are our great feats essayed.

Not of an earth-born order we,
But knighted by that God-like hand
That sometimes made the blind to see
In Judah's storied land.

And dying with the harness on,
What prouder fate could man befall
To answer "Adsum Domine"
To the Archangel's call?

VERSES IN DIALECT

REPRODUCED FROM THE ORIGINAL
CONVERSATIONS OF

OLE POLE BEASLY, ESQ.

NOTE TO THE VERSES IN DIALECT.

While the more generally received idea with reference to the dialect, or incorrect english, spoken by the early settlers of Indiana and their children seems to be that it was a single *patois* spoken by the entire uneducated population of the Territory and State, and often by the more enlightened as well, the truth is that the so-called hoosier dialects were several in number. They were of southern or semi-southern origin, and differed one from another, according to the sections from which the settlers came into the western wilderness.

The dialect which Dr. Taylor sought to reproduce in these poems was that which was dominated by the forms of speech, pronunciation and idiom that the mountaineers of New Virginia, eastern Kentucky and Tennessee and northern Georgia brought into the new land.

It was broader and rougher than the more widely represented speech of the southern lowlands, which has been so effectively rendered by other middle-western poets. The mountaineer said "thar" for there, "fawr" for fair, "swaur" for swear, and used many peculiar, if not picturesque, words and forms of expression which seemed to belong to no other vocabulary than his own. "Ole Pole Beasly," of the "Wobbasht" country, from whose mouth Dr. Taylor professed to have learned the dialect spoken by the ex-southern "hoosiers" of his section, was its unique representative in his dialect verses. Rough, candid, courageous and warm-hearted, yet full of superstitions and subject to such terrors as superstitions impose, Pole Beasly was given to such exaggerations and rough extravagances of speech as had prevailed in the wild mountain district in which his boyhood was spent. The vocabulary was a meager one, and hence many repetitions were inevitable.

A peculiarity of Dr. Taylor's dialect is his attempt to "spell out" the various sounds produced by the speakers of the curious language in which he wrote, as: "thess" for just, "h-yur" for here, "lak" for like, "yuh" for you, "uh" for a, and so on.

To those who have not been familiar with this semi-southern-mountain, semi-hoosier dialect, or this method of reproducing it, the result may, at first, be somewhat confusing and make that a trifle hard to understand which would be easy of comprehension in plain english. But if it is remembered that the syllables thus formed represent the sounds of the uncouth words and not abbreviations of the correct ones, the difficulty may be readily overcome.

Many of Dr. Taylor's literary friends advised against that method of writing the *patois* or dialect; but, after hearing and considering their arguments, he adhered to it and left all his dialect verses written in that way.

Hence it does not seem to be right nor appropriate to do other than to print the verses according to his very evident intent in the matter, and leave the reader to determine for himself the propriety of the orthography as applied to the dialect in question, hoping that it may not obscure the very evident humor and pathos of the poems to any, but that it may add to the enjoyment which most persons may find in them.

B. S. P.

IN DIALECT.

DESERTER BLACK.

I'll tell yuh uh sort uv un nanikdote, lak,
'Bout uh feller ut went buh thuh name uv Black.
He lived awn thuh Wobbasht, buhl-low h-yur uh bit,
Un I thenk he's thess kine-uh stayun thar, yit;
Ur ut least he wuz uhlong en the fall.
Thuh last Ih-yern thrum thuh feller ut tall
He wuz frettun hisseff thess fittun to kill
'Bout tham C'mershul Centurz un thuh penshun bill.

Hit's cuerce tham C'mershul Centurz cain't see—
Nut even tuh get thuh least i-dee
Uv why ar guvverment ort fer tuh lay
Down en ar han's evver dollar ut's back;
Whurrer they owe ut bekaise ar pay
Ort tuh uh ben two dollars uh day—
Or sum'ers 'roun' en that neighburhood, lak;
Ur whurrer thuh fellers they tuck en whole
Un soun' uz uh dollar un bright uz uh pin—
Nut one uv um uvver wuz so uh-gin;
Nairry uh one, ef thuh truth wuz tole,
Uvver could work lak he did buhfore;
Nuvver thuh man ut he wuz—no more!
Whurrer a bullet hit 'im ur nut;
Whurrer thuh roomut-tiz ut he gut,

Ur thuh tairford fevers, ur thuh breast-kumplaint
Thess run thuh feller teetoshully down
Tell 'iz shadder would n't show awn thuh levul groun'.
Tham's thuh times, fellers, ut no feller cain't
He'p hisseff wushun' he thess could git
Home-cookun un home-nussun uh little bit.
But I started tuh tell yuh un nanikdote, lak,
'Bout thuh feller they call Deserter Black.

While thuh boys wuz uh loozn ther grip,
Un ther helth un ther strenth tell they wuz uh sight,
Un hit lookt lak nun uv um ud meck thuh trip, —
Lost 'bout uvvertheng — ceptun thuh fight;
Don't you furgit ut, we didn't looz that!
Ur whawr'd tham C'mershul Centurz be at.
Ef we had uh weakund, or ben no good,
Yuh could mow hay tuhday, whar tham Centurz stood.

But tham C'mershul Centurz they hilt ther own
Un they hilt uhbout uvvertheng elst buhside,
Un now they growl lak uh dawg with uh bone
When we speak up fer uh little divide.
Thuh bon'holder gets his last red cent; —
He runs tham C'mershul Centurz, yuh see; —
'At 's awl right; let 'im have ut! hit's his'n!
But hit allers lookt thisaway, fellers, tuh me:
Tham uz drapt ther biznus un went
Thoo thuh march un thuh fight un thuh rebel pris'n,
Hit wouldn't hurt nobuddy, overly bad,
To uh paid tham boys whut they'd orto uh had.

Hit hain't thess whut yuh uhgreed to pay —
Thuh queschun is, whut yuh orto uh paid,
Honest un open un fair un square.

Yuh paid yer work-han's — fellers ut staid —
Three, four dollars whur yuh paid urse one;
Now would ut be enny more unfair
Tuh uh paid urse right fer all 'at we done?
Ortn't yuh tuh pay thuh differunce back
Tuh awl uh tham boys, includun Black?
Now, whutta yuh gut tuh say tuh that?
But lemmy see thess whur I wuz at:

O, yes! We wuz campt awn thuh Tennessee —
Un uh middlun good chanst fer uh foot-raist er fight —
Un Black he comes tuh muh tent one night,
Un "I 've thess gut uh letter thrum home," sez he;
"They 're lookun up thar fer muh wife tuh die."
I see thuh feller wuz awl broke up
Un whimpern lak whur yud whurpt uh pup,
Un he broke plum down un k'menst tuh cry;
"Cap, she thess keeps uh callun fer me!
Un her eyes thess sot awn thuh bed-room door,
Un she sez — un she keeps awn uh sayun — sez she:
'Ef Black thess knowd ut he 'd cum, fer shore;
They could n't tie 'im away,' she said,
'And me layin' hure on muh dyin' bed.'
Thess take this letter un read ut, Cap!"
But shoh! my eyes wuz wortern till
I could n't uh read uh circus bill;
But I knowd, in reason, he 'd not git to go; —
The rebs wuz right plum uhgin us, yuh know,
And libul to come plum uh hoopun our way,
Like uh streak uh chain-lightnun, any hour uv thuh day;
So I sez: "They hain't furlowun nobuddy, Black,"
Sez-z I, un with that thuh feller he drapt,
Drapt right plum awn thuh flat uv his back;

I thot thuh feller 'd go entuh uh fit;
He cried, un he cusst, un he tuck-awn so
'At I could 'nt stannut unnuther bit—
S'z I: "Furlough or no furlough, Black, *you go!*"

I thot he 'd jump thoo thuh ruff uh that tent;
Un 'e shuck muh han's tell muh knuckles thess popt;
Un right straight out uh thuh door he went,
Un down tuh thuh deeppo; un thar he hopt
Entoo the cab with un injunn'yer
'At knowd 'im ut home, un taken 'im whur
He wawntud tuh go—un thuh naburz sed
Black's wife nuvver let 'im uh foot thrum thuh bed
Tell she died en 'iz arms. Thuh night she went,
Black lit out fer thuh reejumment,
Un he gut down thar, un he cleaned 'iz gun,
En plenty uh time fer all uv thuh fun;
Un 'e fit lak uh tagger, plum awn thoo,
But C'mershul Centurz sez: "'at won't do—
He 's down awn thuh books fer runnun away;
Un 'e gits no penshun un no back pay."
Un thuh pore ole feller must starve er baig,
Packun uh bullut, ur two, in his laig;
Un I tell yuh, fer uh sollum fack,
They's thousun's uh fellers ut's thess lak Black.

C'mershul Centurz! yer hard tuh beat!
Yuh fellers ut gambulz en meat un wheat;
Yuh kun squeal awn penshuns, un rip un holler,
Un clinch yer grip awn thuh mighty dollar,
But I cain't b'leeve you'll have good luck;
You 'll nuvver git over thuh strikes ut's struck;
You 'll nuvver git loost thrum thuh iurn grip

'At munnopully's gut whur hit's holts cain't slip.
You 'll nuvver have no good luck, I say,
Nut tell thuh break uh thuh judgmernt day —
Awnless yuh do whut's fair un right
By tham ole fellers 'at fit yore fight!

THESS TWO.

When I hed thuh fevers, yur ago ur more,
I thess run down tell I gut thess as pore
    As uh penny-rile cow.
    Lak to know how pore wair that,
    I bet my hat,
Salt hits hine-quatters en the holler uv hits horn!
    Thess shor 's yore born.
    Smirymuss said
She could count my ribs plum thoo uh futh-ther bed.
    My sken thess drawed on my bones so tight
    I wair thess uh plum sight.

Thess while I laid thar, hotter unna schew,
I gut uh quair notion 'at I wair thess TWO.
One uv me thess wair uh-puttun on airs
Uth uh bilt shirt on, un uh livun up-stairs,
Thess good enough thess to make thuh best
Uvva Babtus purcher — ur uh Meth-thy-dest.

Tuther one, he wair uh hell-uvva feller!
Thess loafern all-time, thess down en thuh cellar.
No store clothes! Nut nairry uh cent!
Awl-time cawn-cocktun uv some devil-ment.

Thess senst I gut well I thess don't know,
But tham wair thuh facks, as I kin show.
Airry yuther ways I 'd lak to know why
Sometimes I 'm thess as good as sweet pertater pie?
I thess, thess say
Uvver-theng thess en thuh please-unest way,
An I thess wawnt to hep
Airry feller 'at's kep
His ornerry ole shovel-plow all time stuck
Down uh furry of thess dod-burned bad luck—
Feel thess good as uh purcher atter prayers.
"Ooh, hooh!" says I, "'at's thuh feller up-stairs!"
Then agin, when hits tuth-ther one uv urse,
Dod-burned ef I hain't thess spilun fer uh furse.
Tham times, uvver-theng 'at uvver happened yit
Made me so mad I 'd uh loved to uh fit.
Feller wawnts hep, he better stay away,
An' thess come un seemy some yuth-ther day;
Ef I git whur theys liquor I thess wawnt to drenk,
Un uvver kine-uh mean-us 'at uh feller uvver thenk;
I thess wawnt to cuss
Uvver dod-burned theng plum black an' blue,
Or do some-phun wuss.
"Ooh, hooh!" sez I, "I know you, too!
You 're the dod-burned feller
'At loafers en thuh cellar!"

An' whut gits me,
Uvverbody kin see
H-yan dod-burned, undermindun son-uvva-gun
Is uh runnun thengs twicst, to the yuth-ther feller's one!

"THESS, THESS THEN, I SEED THUH THENG"

THE THENG.*

I thess tell you, gentlemen,
Ef airry uh one of you hed ben
Long with me
Soce you could see,
At is — ef you could see uh tall;
More 'n thuh thattair back wall;
'Less thuh night
Hed ben more light.

Thuh moon looked all drawed up, an' green,
Not much bigger 'n uh butter-bean;
Thuh groun' wair wet an' slick as soap;
My critter wair go-un uh p-yeart-like lope;
Some dad-blame dawg sot up uh howl;
An, out en thuh bresh, some ornerry owl
Thess kep' uh beller'n — 'f I'd hed uh steck,
I'd love to uh broke hits ornerry neck!

Thess en thuh day-time, unner-stan,
I'm thess as vi-gerce as any man;
But uh cloud thess come uhcrost thuh sky;
Thess then my critter commenced to shy;
I felt so cu-erce I thought I'd seng;
Thess, thess *then*, I seed thuh THENG.

My beece see hit fust, un thar she stuck;
Thess squatted, un trimmeled, un thess, thess shuck.

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* THE THENG — Was a name frequently given by the early settlers of Indiana from certain sections of the South for any mysterious apparition, the origin of which they did no understand. — *Poets and Poetry of Indiana, Page 263.*

I wouldn't look towards thuh buryin' groun;
But my head thess turned hitseff 'roun';
I thess be tee-toe-tially, thess dawg-gone,
Ef thar wawnt thuh THENG, with grave clothes on.

Look lak? Well!—when I seed hit
I thess laid whurp, an' licketty split,
I thess went uh bilun down thuh lane,
Uh holdin' on to my critter's mane
'Spectin, uvver jump she fotch,
Thess, thess then's whur I'd git cotch.

How tall? Men, that's purty rough!
But I say, right h-yur, hit wair tall enough
To thess make airry feller h-yur thess feel
As cold as uh waige, an' limber's uh eel;
You don't suppose at uh feller'd breng
His mayzhern pole, an' mayzher thuh THENG!

GRAN-SUR BEASLY'S PRAYER.

Gran-sur Beasly thess allus hed
Fambly wushshup 'fore uh go-un to bed;
Whenny gut uh far start, you could hear him pray
Uh thess plum mild-unna-half away;
En I thess be-gawn!
Ef thuh ole feller uvver wair uh puttun uv hit awn,
Butta hollered tham prayers uth all his might,
Thess caize he thought hit wair thess plum right.

One night some Shonnys* clim' up en thuh loff,
Thess a-packun uv Gran-sur's bacon off.
While tham Shonnys was hainnun out hams,
Thoo uh hole en thuh ruff,
Thess, thess shore nuff
Gran-sur lit into readun uv Psalms.
Sk-yeart tham Shonnys so bad 'at they laid
Up thar en thuh loff tell thuh ole feller prayed.

Some folks thenks tham Injuns hain't thuh leece
More feeluns en thess, thess uh plum brute beece,
Un no more saince en uh passel uh geese;
But thess when Gran-sur lit outen his chur
En hollered at thuh Lord, zeffy knowed thess whur
Thuh Good Bee-un wair — not so overly n-yur,
Nuth-ther, to jedge thrum thuh way he hollered —
Tham Injuns thess collered
Tham nice k-yored hams, un thess, thess brung
Thuh plum last one thess back, an' flung
Um all thoo thuh door
Plum onto thuh floor;
Thess tole Gran-sur they 's too dod-burned sk-yeart
Uv uh feller at dast
To holler an' sast
Airy sech uh Bee-un as thess thuh Gret Sp-yeart.
Gran-sur thess 'lowed he 's thess plum beat,
As thuh feller said;
He was ast-un fer bread,
An' thuh Lord wair busy uh save-un uv his meat.

* Shawnees.

BILLY IN THE LOW GROUNDS.

Hit aint any use uh tryin' any more,
For the world turns round agin uh feller 'at's pore.
Uh fly on uh rim of uh grindin' stone,
Heavin' an' uh settin' to keep it thrum goin'
'S uh sight to make the Gods an' thuh bull frogs laugh,
But he aint as big uh fool as uh feller, by half.

They's things 'at sets by thuh road an' wait
To trip uh feller up when he's struck uh good gait,
An' thuh old-time folks they called 'em Fate,
An' said 'at they retch for thuh little an' great.
But durn my skin — as I've said uhfore —
They never tech uh feller 'nless he's pore.

This yur hit's uh drouth, an' corn on the groun',
When it orter ben green, was yaller an' brown;
An' thuh pigs starved out, an' thuh cow died, too,
Kase they wasn't fodder to winter 'em thru.
But what's thuh difference? Ef't hadn't ben that,
Hit ud ben sumphun wuss — I'll bet my hat.

Next yur, when the corn es all tosseled out,
*An' uh feller's beginnin' to cackle about
The truck 'at he'll git when he sells his crap —
Thess keep yer eye peeled, an' ye'll hear sumpen drap,
The Wabash 'll climb right up in uh night,
En kiver that corn thess uh mile outen sight.

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*It will be observed that Dr. Taylor uses "an'" and "un" for "and" indeterminately, which he is evidently warranted in by the common usage of the early settlers.

Billy-In-The-Lowgrounds

Lemme tell you, I'm talkin' what I know;
Hit was thess about the same uh long while ago.
Me an' Jim started out even — an' you see,
Why 'leven of uh dozen ud uh bet on me.
But shucks, he was right up uh comin' an' clim —
There was no things settin' by thuh road fur Jim.

Sometimes I think I've struck 'er thess right,
An' I pile up thuh corn till hits thess uh plum sight;
But thuh things uh settin' by thuh road are thar,
An' down they come on uh feller onawar'.
More 'n once they 've tuk underholts en flung
Me flat with thuh fevers in thuh striffen 'o my lung;

An' kep me thar till thuh corn's all gone,
Thuh season over, an' nothin' comin' on.
Tham was thuh times when uh keen butcher knife
Was thuh shortest an' shinyest road outen life.
I 'd tuk that road too, many uh time,
Ef't hadn't ben for that ole fiddle o' mine.

I'd put my hand right soft roun' 'er neck,
My fingers like birds on thuh strings ud peck.
Threckly you'd notice hyan ole bent bow,
Hugged down to the bridge en uh slidin' slow,
Tell she 'd chirrup en whistle, an' holler an' shout
"Billy en thuh Low Grounds, play thuh chune out!"

An' I'd up en shake my fist whur I knowed
The Things was uh settin' uh waitin' by the road.
'Nef I am thuh fly on thuh grindin' stone,
Mebby I kin hinder hit uh little thrum goin'.
Let thuh world turn agin uh feller 'at 's pore —
Billy in thuh Low Grounds tries 'er once more.

TERBACKER.

I was thess uh sayin' to Bill un Mart,
Ez you cum up — I sez, s'z I,
My ge-yurls is gittin uh leetle too smart!
They 'll pursh thrum schoolun, by-um-by;
Thess sence they cut
Fer Terry Hut,
I 'm thess dod-burned
Ef them ge-yurls learned
Airy uh hate but thess nonsense,
Un, what is wuss,
At my ickspense;
But I 'm no feller fer uh furse.

I never said nothin' 'bout thuh cost —
I knowed 'at they hed to hev some style;
Thur dressin', I tell yuh, tuk uh pile; —
Ge-yurls caint be bossed
About thur clothes!
I don't puppose
To thess turn in un pin 'em down
Thess to uh five-cent caliker gown.

Atter uh spell, thuh oldest, Hester,
Begin fur to pester
Me, thess to build — un kep uh jokin',
Kinder pokin'
Fun at ar cabin, thrum mornin' till night.
They tuk thur delight
Hintin' un pestern, till I gut tard,
'S ruther hard;

When Smirymuss sez, at the supper-table :
"Ge-yurls, you know your pap hain't able,
Thess now, to build ! "
Well, I hed hild,
Up to thet time, right onto my groun',
But I thess turned 'roun',
Un I up un I built uh two-story brick,
Un I done it quick.

Next come ke-yarpets, chromos un sich.
I waunt rich,
But I did n't keer ;
When they got thet me-er,—
Big as uh door ;
Retch thrum thuh ceilin' to thuh floor,
Un cost me sebenty dollars er more,—
Up I goes
Un looked at my shadder thrum head to toes.
Un I never pass
Afore 'at glass
But what hit takes me on thuh supprise ;
I bug my eyes —
I thess caint think thuh feller I see
Is me !
I could n't say no, when thuh youngest, Hanner,
Sot down en my lap
Un snickered out, " Pap,
You 've gut to git us uh new pie-anner ! "

Woll 'ats all right. I never saw
A commydatiner fambly yit ;
But when uh feller 'ats usen to chaw
Hez gut to git

Outen the house when he hez to spit,
I tell you
Hit puts him thoo
To have so blamed much walkin to do.

Sunday evenin' while I set
I see thess whar thuh back-wall het
Un thuh crack acrost thess plum as pat
'At I yusen to spit my ambeer at.
Thar I sot
Till I plum forgot
Un I thess cut loose
Uth uh pint o' juice!
Right thoo my teeth thuh ambeer hove
On ar new nickerrel-plated stove!
I hearn uh scream,
Un I see thuh steam
'At riz whar thuh ambeer trickerld down
Un stained 'at nickerrel uh ornery brown;
Un Smirymuss says (kivern her face)
"Pap's spitten place
Is gittin scaise!
Eh! hay! hay!"
She up un she says it, thess thataway
Un Murrandy reckoned—
She's thuh second—
She sez s-z-z-she, "Maw,
Ar Perfessor says Pap ortent to chaw!"
Then I thess riz,
Un I far-lee siz!
"Ef—ef—ef—ef—ef—" s'z I,
(Un yorter uh seed thuh ambeer fly.)

"Ef I waunt to chaw
They haint no law
To hender me thrum chawin, I guess!
Them dad-blamed fools
At yer Nommel schools
Hed better thess tend to thur own biz-ness."

When I git hot enough to bile,
My ge-yurls thess quile
Thuselves awhile.
I see Smirymuss shakin her head,
Thurreckly they thess sneaked off to bed
Zef they was runnin' uh quawter race,
Holdin' thur aperns to thur face
As they went past,
Thess about half
Uh dyin' to laugh,
Ef they dast.

Last night I went awhile to set
My feet at thuh stove to git em het
Right hot afore I went to bed;
Un Murrandy said,
Noddin' her head,
"Pap, we 've bought you uh cursperdore."
"A which?" sez I;
(Wush I may die
Ef ever I hearn thuh name before!)

Then I see uh kinder jug
Of uh theng on thuh rug,
Un Smirymuss sez, s'z she, purty soon,
"Hit 's thess uh spittoon."

"Adzackly," says I. Un thuh ge-yurls thess run
Ento thuh pollor to hev thur fun.

Mart, I spect
You reckle-lect
The summer you hept my pap to thash?
I mout uh ben
Nigh onto ten,
Un I up un I tuk thuh worter-brash;
Nothin' I et
Ud scaisely set
On my stummick 'thout thess spilin
Un comin' up bilin;
Un I thess run down tell I gut too pore
To throw airry shadder onto thuh floor;
Un they all sed
Hit were thuh dish-pepsy 'at I hed.
Nothin' I tuk done any good,
Un I thess stood
Hit long as I could;
I, thenks I to myse'f, I'll try my luck
Visitin' back in Ole Kaintuck.

Ole Doc Bagsley, uh uncle um mine,
Lived slap on thuh Hardin' county line;
Worst ole feller 'at ever wore har
To git on uh tar,
Rip un swar,
Cuss everytheng black un blue;
But he, he knew,
Thess when he were drunk, more en one day
Than airry ten doctors knowed en two—
'At 's what thess everybody say.

He looks at me
Un he sez, s-z-z-ze,
"Jawn Hennery, you hain't hit
On docterin fer thuh right theng yit.
Dish-pepsy!" (he was uh mighty hash-
Spoken man) "Hit 's thuh worter-brash!
I 'll enshore
Uh thess plum ke-yore
Ef you get terbacker un take uh chaw
Whenever your innards begins to gnaw."
Yessir, he thess up un he say
Them 'air words, thess thataway.

Well, so to speak,
Hit waunt uh week
Tell you'd uh scaicely knowed uh feller;
Whar my stummick hed ben uh achin'
I'd feel uh hunk of rusty bacon
Thes uh layin' es nice un meller.
I think hit mout
A ben about
A week tell I'd let my wawmus out,
Un I gained uh pound un uh half, I bet
Fur every meal of vittels I et.
Ef I was to quit uh chawin' to-day
I'd hev thuh worter-brash right away;
Fur Doc, he says, s-z-ze to me,
"You dast to let Terbacker be."
"At's what I say!"
Thess that away.

Lots of times I've ben away
Thrum home thuh biggest end of uh day,

Miss my dinner, un git so weak
I could scaisely speak,
I'd thess draw
My "Ole Virginny," un take uh chaw;
Bout uh minute I'd plum furgit
I'd ben thuh least bit
Hongry yit.

No Professer dast to tell me
Terbacker in-jerce, when I kin see!
Thar's Gran-Sur Beasly, thuh neighbors said,
He chawed purty nyur
Onto eighty-four yur;
Un thuh day he was dead
He hadn't uh awnsoun tooth en his head!
Any them peart F'zology men
Thess—thess—thess tell me ef they ken,
Thess—thess summizen
At terbacker's pizen
Un 'sno shore ke-yore fur thuh worter-brash
Ull hev me to thash! ! !

A RAIST-HAUST.

Raist-hausses, now is mighty pore thengs.
I thess now, see
Some uh tham trotters at plum gut me.
Look lak theys hilt tog-yuther with strengs;
Tippun along lak theys walkun on aigs,
Uth luth-ther shoulder-braces all over thur laigs;
You 're thess mighty right,
They 're thess uh plum sight.

Last time I wair
At the Tairry Hut Fair—
I thess tuck en went
Fur my devil-ment,—
I says, thess z-i, to one uh tham chaps
With thuh pinted yeller caps,
Z-i, "Looky h-yur,
Ef you don't k-yur
To hev some feller awn-buckle tham straps;
I thess, thess hone
To see 'f tham critters kin stain up alone."

I thess tell *you*,
Tham drivers cust uvver theng black en blue;
An I thess laid
Down en thuh shade,
Whur I hed uh good chaince,
Un laughed tell I busted thuh buckle umma paince.

Gran-sur Beasly yusen t' one uh haust
'At wair thess uh crost
Thrum uh right Injun racer, an' uh Arab mare;
Outrun airry haust uvver wore hair.
They wawnt uh soul
Uvver could backer—with thuh ceptions of Pole.
Pole wair one uh tham fellers ut could ride
Anytheng uvver wrapped en uh hosses hide.

Uh plum raw Arsh-mun, one time, brung
Uh raist-haust, uvverbody say hed flung
Dirt all over uvver dod-burned haust
Atty uvver come acrost;
Uvverbody say at dod-burned beece
Hed thess put thuh trimmuns on uvvertheng Eece.

Atter uh spell main gut scaise
At ud banter at Arsh-mun thess fur uh raist.
So he taken uh trip,
Thess plum clur
Away out h-yur.
Thess to try Gran-sur's raist-haust uh rip.

They wawnt no feller uvver struck this town
At uvver backed Gran-sur Beasly down.
Gran-sur thess went
Bettun longs uvver he could borry uh cent;
Un I unnerstan
He bet twenty sections uv Otter Crick lan.
Attair Arsh-mun, thess fur uh fack,
Bet uvvertheng, down to thuh coat on his back.
Main g-yuthered en fur uh plum hunnerd mile,
Un thess went to bettun thuh size uh thur pile;
They'd uh half uh mild track,
Un thuh waggons wair so theck
'At you couldn't uh shuck uh steck
Thess attum, thess all thuh way up, an' back.

Gran-sur's critter wair uh sleepy lookun nag;
Y' orter thess h-yurn at Arsh-mun brag.
His critter thess hilt hits head way up;
Un looked thess purty as airry speckled pup.
Un thuh feller at rid,
Had on — 'at is, uh say atty did —
Uh blue velvet coat un yeller silk paince;
Haint seed nairry sich uh riggun saince.
Pole, unnerstan, wawnt uh plum bit sk-yurt
En his nankeen paince, an his toe-linnen shirt.
An I thess be gawn,
'At wair uvvertheng at thuh feller hed on!

They wawnt no backun, nur murneuvern roun',
Cavortun unna praincun all over thuh groun'.
But I thess be gawn!
They both loped on,
An both fellers hit
Thur haust thuh same time, an lickerty split
They both went uh bilun down 'at track
Un I h-yurn some,
Thess at thuh out-come,
Say Pole wair uh laughun an lookun back,
At the Arsh-boy uh cussun uth all his might,
An' whurpun' at haust, tell he's thess uh plum sight!
You 'd uh give uh dollar
To uh h-yurn tham fellers thess yellan holler;
An' be dod-burned ef Gran-sur Beasly didn't say
'At they turned en an fit, thess thuh balance of thuh day.

BIG PEE-YEARCH.

Best fish uvver uh feller et
Ez thess big pee-yearch — kin tell yuh thet!
No bones in um, but thess back-bone,
Meat thess yeller, un hard ez uh stone!
Clean pee-yearch nice, un fry hit thess brown;
Need n't to swoller — hit thess slips down!
A feller kin eat
A thess plum sight uh 'at kind uh meat.
Thess sence I wair six munce old
I et all uh pee-yearch 'at I could hold.
Airry yuther fish ez thess so hash
One mess give feller thuh worter-brash.

I 've thess et pee-yearch tell m' under jaw
Thess gut too dad-burned tard to chaw.
Feller kin eat thess uh mess fur uh dog,
Nen go to bed un sleep lak uh log.

Pee-yearch ez mastrest fish yuvver cotch!
I kin reckl-leck thess well yit
First big pee-yearch 'at uvver bit
At my hook, give uh lunge un fotch
My hickory pole plum thoo my han's;
Made the pans
Thess hot as far.
Feller orto hev tar,
Soast hold tight,
Ef uh big pee-yearch bite.

Fishun fur pee-yearch, ef thuh crick 's plum clur,
You dast to go nee-yur.
Pee-yearch cain't hee-yur—
Hain't airry uh yur;—
But ef—ef he hain't thess mighty pee-yeart,
Easiest theng skee-yeart!
Pee-yearch kin tell
A feller by thuh smell
Thess, thess ez well!
Smell him crost thuh crick—un 's fur agin;
'At ez—unnerstan'—uh big pee-yearch kin.

Feller 's gut to step thess light ez uh cat
Ur uh pee-yearch ull know thess whur he 's at
Pee-yearch cain't hee-yur, but he feels thuh jair
'At goes thoo thuh groun',
'R else thess thoo thuh air,

When yur foot comes down.
Nen he 'll thess scoot
Fur thuh neardest root;
Fellers well go — thess so to speak;
Big pee-yearch won't come out fur uh week.

Some fellers per-tend to know thess uh sight
'Bout best time fur pee-yearch to bite.
I 'd thess ez livs at uh feller don't
Tell me when pee-yearch ull bite, ur won't.
They notion I tuck,
Hit thess dee-pens on uh feller's luck;
Feller feels zef he couldn't highst
Good sized munner outen uh pot;
Ur hez to go back wunst ur twighst
Attar uh theng 'at he plum forgot;
Ur, whut ez thess about ez bad,
Sumphun thess gits him cussin mad,
Thess well let thuh fishun thess drap,
Couldn't ketch uh pee-yearch ef he jump'd en yur lap.

Thess, thess laist yur,
Some Terry Hut fellers come fishun up hee-yur;
One feller thess wair flyun high,
Thess wore specs thess on one eye.
'At feller thess made me plum mad
Sniggern roun, un sayin: "'At he had
Give this sub-jick much ree-see-yearch
Un they thess waunt airry sech uh fish ez uh pee-yearch."
Yutther fellers laughed tell they thess about bust;
I mighty nee-yur cust.
He sez: "Hits thess nothun else but thuh basst."
S'z I: "Thess don't gimme none uh yur sast,

Less I'll thess teck
Thuh last one uv yuh by thuh scruff uv thuh neck
Tho yuh en thuh crick, thess head un feet,
Ef yuh waunt too ornery fur uh pee-yearch tuh eat."
Tell yuh! em fellers thess quiled down,
None uv em ben up sence, thrum town.

Pee-yearch kep' me
Thrum uh whurpun spree
Thess when I wair leb-un yur old,
Full uh my meanuss ez I could hold.
Run off uh Sunday, un went tuh thuh crick,
Them days pee-yearch wair thess plum thick.
I cotch one at wair thess about
Th'ee foot long,
Un 'at dad-burned strong,
Tuck all urse boys tuh git thuh theng out.
Goin' home I seed Pap holt uv uh gad,
Thess eechun tuh lamme — thengs looked bad,
Gut up tuh whur he wair waitun at;
Fore I gut time tuh open my head,
He see my fish, un he up un he said:
"Jawn, whur ye ketch sech uh pee-yearch ez 'at?"

Thess 'bout uh hour
Atter uh shower,
At ez — ef nuff rain fell tuh rile
Thuh brainch, whur it runs entuh thuh crick
Yuh kin noaduss thess quick
Thuh big pee-yearch makun thuh worter thess bile.
Tho en yur hook with uh fresh minner awn,
Scat! hit's thess gone!
Big pee-yearch thess riz

Tuck thet minner un hook thess zip!
Nen he thess rip
Thoo thuh worter tell thuh line thess ziz-z!

Ef feller 's too brash
He kin thess play smash
Pullun up his pole afore he orter.
Git big pee-yearch awn top thuh worter,
Thess whur he kin see,
Nen whu-u-u-ee-e-ee!
He thess gives a surge—
Pow'ful splurge!
Pole flies up lak uh rubber ball,
Way goes yur pee-yearch, thess hook un all;
Nen thess all 'at uh feller kin do
He thess cusses uvver-theng black un blue.
Orto hilt awn till pee-yearch tard down,
Nen aise uh chaince fur to bring him 'roun'.
Bet my head agin airry aig,
I 've drawed up pee-yearch thess long ez my laig.

Hain't seed no sech pee-yearch fur thuh last
Forty yur past.
Reckon they 's skee-yeared,
Kinder uh fee-yeared,
Some feller 'at thess called "specs" uh eye-glast
Ud give 'em thess some ornerry name—
Pee-yearch hain't tuh blame.
"Atter much ree-see-yearch,"
Ez 'at feller said, ef I wuz uh pee-yearch
I 'd thess ruther die ez be called uh basst.

LITTLE JAWNCE JEETERS'S COON.

Little Jawnce Jeeters cotch him uh coon —
Uh young un — thess up on Otter Crick;
Dawgs did n't hurt thuh blame theng none,
Ur thess enough fer to make hit thess sick;
Jawnce fed hit milk thrum uh arn spoon;
Thess when thuh feedun fust begun
The coon wair uh leetle mite backurd an' sk-yeart.

Hit gut to follern Jawnce thess lak uh pup,
Skummishun atter the feller's heels,
Ur dodgun under thuh waggon wheels;
Un hit thess drug thess more crawfish up!
Gran-sur Beasly thess, thess say:
"Hit git en thuh brainch un thar hit stay,
Uh lookun roun' for sump-hun to see,
As awn-cawn-sarned as uh theng could be,
Turnun hits head thess uvver way,
Feelun un workun hits hains aroun'
Snay-kun uv crawfish outun thuh groun'."
Coon gut fat es uh fool, becaise
Crawfish hain't no theng 'at's scaise.

Sometimes Mr. Coon he 'd ketch —
Ur ruther, git cotch — with uh big un, thar,
Uth claws on hum lak uh sickle-bar,
Thess 'bout tough as uh saddle sk-yurt.
When hit clunch on sump-hun gut hurt.
Gran-sur Beasly 'd set un laugh
To see 'at coon git up un travel,
Un thess keep on uh thoe-un gravel,

Un bellern lak uh yaylun calf;
Roll all over uh acre uh groun',
Thoe-un an' slashun thuh crawfish roun',
Runnun for Jawnst to git hit loose,
Un thess as mad as uh settun goose.

One time Gran-sur Beasly sot,
Cailless-lak, en his luth-ther chur;
Thuh atternoon wair middlun hot;
Thuh ole man snoozed zef he didn't k-yur
Whuther school thess kep' ur not,
Long 's he 's head,—
As thuh feller said,—
Uth his laigs a lay-un up on thuh bainch,
Un thuh coon ketchun crawfish down at thuh brainch;
Fust theng he knowed, thess kus-slap
Sump-hun thess drap
En thuh ole feller's lap—
Thuh coon! Gee-whiz! how hit did holler!
Hit thess climb
Gran-sur lak hit wair clime-un uh limb;
Crawfish cotch on thuh ole feller's collar,
An' shore 's I 'm h-yur
Nailed holt uv his yur.
Gran-sur Beasly wair thess, thess thuh best
Ole feller en thuh wurl, un uh Methodest,
But tham at h-yurn him thess, thess said
As he lit fer thuh door,
Uth thuh craw-fish rattlun aroun' his head,
Some feller swore;
Him ur thuh coon,
Thess es soon

As airry, which one hit wair, could speak,
Lit in to cussun uh plum blue streak.
Thess, thess yit,
Ef you wawnt to git
Gran-sur thess mad enough to sizz,
Ast him what-fer yur-bobs crawfish is.

THE AIGGER.

'Em folks 'at thess moved thrum thuh East
Haint gut thuh least
Idee uv aigger, thess uh-tall.
Haint no aigger hee-yur ess fall.
Haint seed aigger anywhawr
Thess sence thuh War.

Now-days, feller gits thuh chills,
Thess well quit payun boardun bills.
Yusen tuh be, ef aigger tuck
Holts awn uh feller, it thess ud whet
His ap-tite up; harder he shuck,
Thuh more he et.

Uh feller 'ats ben
Roun' hee-yur when
Terry Hut wair thess en thuh bresh,
Hez seed thuh right Aigger, thess plum fresh.
Apt tuh feel thess ornerry mean
Time thuh pawnds wuz turnun green.

"The Nigger."

Thess long when dawg-days come,
Ef uh feller swum,
Thess awn thuh Wabash
Git kivvered uth at-air yeller scum,
Un et thess, thess, uh mess uh trash,
He gut ut-shore;
Cawn-trairyest aigger tuh kee-yore.

Thess git out un set en thuh sun,
Lack uh torkle awn eend uv uh log,
Caillestest theng yuvver done,
Feel too ornerry fur uh dawg;
Thurreckly thuh theng thess taken hits track,
Streakun un streakun up yer back,
Zef uh slice
Thess plum ice
Thess uh meltun long thuh sken
Un freezun en.
Draw uh feller ento uh knot!
Atter uh spell, he gits so hot,
Rasslun roun' un makun uh furse,
Tho-un thuh kivvers evvur-whurs!
Feller'd thenk
He's thess uh fish, tuh see him drenk,
Long's uvver kin hold thuh cup—
Un 'en turn roun' un tho ut up.

Thess when thuh theng hez gut yuh het
Thess hot enough tuh thess about bile,
Hit starts uh dod-burned ornerry sweat,
Smells zef yous bout tuh spile;
Worse un uh kee-yarn,
Smell furs thrum hee-yur tuh thuh barn.

Thet air sweat thess usen tuh pour
Clur thoo un thoo ar feather-bed
Thess onto thuh floor.
Run en uh stream plum outen thuh door;
'At is, a-peerntly hit ded,
Ez thuh feller sed.

Gran'pap Beasly first moved hee-yur,
Pole hed aigger fur seb-en yur;
He gut thess thin ez airry uh rail
Un pow'ful pale.
His neck turned kinder green un yeller;
'At-air color stuck tuh thuh feller,
Thess plum up tell thuh day 'at he died.
He hed uh aigger-cake en his side,
Thess big, purty nee-yur,
Ez uh keg uv bee-yur—
Made Pole mad
Tuh tell him he hed.

Third-day aigger, sometimes, brung
Enfurmation en striffen uv thuh lung.
Take thuh feller's mayzhur thess long down
Ez yuh brung thuh doctor up thrum town.
Curn-jestuff chills ez thess thuh same—
Airry uh defference, thess en thuh name.
I hed thuh second un, wunst, comun awn—
Third un, uh feller 's ez good ez gone!
Pap bridled ar mare, un thess tuck acrost,
Found Dock thess sleepen en thuh hay;
Hed n't tuck his close off, night ur day,
Fur leb-en weeks, un nuvver hed lost
Airry sech uh case. But he wair then

So drunk 'at hit thess tuck th'ee four men
To he'p 'at feller awn-to his hoss—
Pap sed hit did!
He thess laid whurp, un he thess rid
Plum thoo thuh woods
Tight ez he could;—
Rid thet mild up ar place
Middlun good time fur quawter race!

He thess piled off un stumbled en hee-yur,
Tried tuh set down awn uh shadder uv uh chur.
He sez: "Young feller, you 're mighty sick!
I hain't gut hee-yur uh minute tuh quick!"
Whut yuh think 'at feller do?
Thess gimme uh lemon un whiskey schew!

Thess thrum thuh minute 'at I commenst,
Hev n't hed airry uh aigger senst!
Yuh unnerstan—
I keep thet medsun thess awn han';
Thess, thess soast
I kin take uh doast
Ef I feel lak
Aigger sneakun up muh back.
Shorestest way
'S tuh take more ur less uvver day.

Cur-ker-mers mighty aiggerish mess!
Feller thess
Cut off thuh eends un slice um thin,
Let thuh vinegar git soaked in,
Un eat uh passel: hit 's thess enough—
Shake? Thess dad-burn muh hide,
Ef I hain't thess tried un tried!

Shake thuh clabboards offen thuh ruff!
Thess ast Smirymuss ef she hain't hilt
Me thrum shakun offen thuh bed,
By settun awn thuh eend uv thuh quilt!
Shuck thuh teeth right outen muh head!
Leave hit tuh Pap.
Woosh I may drap
Right en muh tracks
Ef them hain't facks!

OLE HYMES.*

(WINTER.)

When thuh taters en thuh cellar,
Un thuh wood ez en thuh shed,
Un thuh apples gittin meller
En thur strawy, groun-y bed,
Un thuh cabbage en thur ditches
Ez uh standin' awn thur head,
Un thuh limber willer switches
By thuh crick ez turnin' red,
Un thuh dawg begins tuh loafer
Roun' thuh h'a'th most all thuh time—
Then uh feller better go fur
To git ready fur Ole Hymes.

When thuh weemin ez uh fussin'
'Bout thuh kee-yarpets bein' wove,
Un yuh huy-ar uh feller cussin'
While he's puttin' up uh stove,

* Old Hiems.

Un you 're huntin' fur yur mittens
En thuh garret un below,
Un yuh wonder why thuh knittin'
Uv thuh socks gits awn so slow,
Uh yuh let yur ha'r grow outen
'Nough tuh kiver up your yur—
Then I tell yuh I 'm uh shoutin'
Pappy Hymes ez somers ny-ur.

When thuh pillers en thuh winder,
Un thuh hat ez en thuh sash,
Un thuh feet ez awn thuh fender,
Un thuh children hev thuh rash,
Un thuh nube ez awn thuh head,
Un thuh nose ez en thuh hand,
Un thuh snow ez awn thuh shed
Whur thuh tom-cat used tuh stand,
Un thuh chimney gits tuh hummin',
Un we lak tuh huy-ar hit hum—
Then they say Ole Hymes ez comin',
Un hit 's blame him, let him come.

THE WOBBASHT.

Air's one theng h-yur 'at we injoy,
At yuh fellers over en thuh Eel-lunnoy
Haint gut now, un nuvver kin git.
I don't wawnt tuh p-yur lak braggun awn hit,
Caise taint no theng at uh feller kin make.
N' I don't thenk at uh feller ort tuh take,
Too much credut fur airry theng ef
Hits thataway becase hit caint hep hitself.

But I thess be naychurly thess dod-dasht
Ef they uvver wair uh pawn ur river ur crick
At wair thess tuh my notion, mine yuh, half ez slick
Ez thuh Hoosier Injun River, thuh Ole Wobbasht!
Hit haint whut you'd call so overly wide;
But hit haint gut uh theng about ut at's snide.
Th'ee four days atter airry kine uh rain
Hits naychurly ez clur ez thess uh winder-pane,
Ef hit wawnts tuh git wide, yuh thess bet yur pilde,
Hit overflows thuh bottoms fur th'ee four mild;
Hit haint thess uh fust rate place fur tuh skeet,
But I'll lay 'at thuh swimmun thess caint be beat.

Ef yuh Eel-lunnoy men haint cut yur worter-tooth,
Yuh 'low thuh Embairce is thess middlun smooth!
I'z there las' summe'n I wawnt tuh say, men,
Ef I wair uh fesh I'd ruther be fotch
Tuh thuh Wobbasht River ef I hed tuh git cotch
An' fried thuh fust day, than go back whur I ben
Tuh swim thuh Embarice my th'ee-score un ten.

I say, right h-yur at I don't loafer roun'
Thess tuh be uh runnun uv thuh Eel-lunnoy down,
I thenk Gran-Prairry's purty nuff, un all
Kivered with big yaller blawsums en thuh Fall;
But hits thess so blame big un lonesome un wide,
Feller feels lack thuh haint nuthun tother side,
An' the wurl eends h-yander at thuh Big Divide.
Feller gits tuh thenkun sich little thengs ez urse
Humans ez too little tuh be makun uv uh furse.
Feller feels zeffy dast fur tuh talk out loud.
So I go bilun home an' feelun mighty proud
An' all en uh tickle — ur I wush I may be thast —
Tuh git en shakun distunce uv thuh Ole Wobbasht.

LOCUSSES.

[In Collaboration with Richard Lew Dawson.]

Well, thess tee-totially blame my sken!
H-yur 's them locusses agen!
Need n't tell me hit 's sebenteen yur,
Ur anywhurs n-yur,
Sence they 've ben h-yur,
Fur I thess know hit 's no sech theng!
Think I 'm fur-gittun how they steng?
Had n't been fur gallon uh apple-jack,
Peach brandy, 'r sump'm, thess while back,
I 'd plum gone under, shor 's yore born!
Stung slap en thuh neck! I taken uh horn.
Thess 'bout th'ee four orzs thrum then
I wuz thess ez p-yeart ez I 'd uvver ben.

Thess look 't thuh varmints awn thuh tree!
Curestest thengs yuh uvver see.
Thur kind uh purty — red, pop eyes,
Wengs lak uh snake-feeder's, 'r else uh fly's.
Thess h-yur um hollern! Thess dawg-gawn!
Thess lak uh passel uh frogs at thuh pawn;
H-yur awn thuh groun 's thuh holes they make:
Look lak uz punched with tooth uv uh rake.
Themmair brown bugs uh layin' aroun'
Is thess thuh shell — clum outen thuh groun'
'N thess busted outen this crack en thur back;
I 'll thess, thess eat um ef 't aint uh fack!

'N' now them dad-burned, ornerry chaps
'Ll kill thuh fruit un spile thuh craps!

Eat uvver leaf 'n theng 'ats green!
Wust lookun sight yuh uvver seen
Wen they git thoo! Then they 'll thess slide
Back en thur holes, un thar they 'll hide
Fur sebenteen yur — 'at 's whut they say —
'N' 'en bust out thuh same ole way!
Beatunest thengs tuh dig 'n' climb!
Why cain't they stay hid all thuh time?
I cain't, fur thuh life uh me, git roun'
Whut good themmair bugs do 'bove groun'!
But feller 'll not nuvver hev no need-
Cessity now fur no more feed;
Thess turn out thuh stock 'n fowls tuh ketch
Them locusses — thess eat all you 'll fetch!

Now w'en I talk 'bout eatum nen you
Think 'at 's sump'm no feller kin do!
But whut 'f I say thur good tuh eat?
'N some 'low nothin' else kin beat
A juicy locus — stewed ur fried —
Ur else ar county paper lied.

Thar wair uh feller by thuh name
Uv Riley — wunner ef 't waunt thuh same
'At 's ben uh makin' poarty jokes
Un leck-churn 'bout urse Hoosier folks? —
Well, airry-a-ways, he et them thengs
Thess by thuh peck — heads, laigs un wengs!
'N' says wen thuh hoppers thess gone thoo
Your craps, turn en an' eat tham, too. R. L. D.

I tell yuh, fellers! I thess, thess
Thenk 'ats uh mighty mommicked up mess.

I reckon, 'at down at Riley's place,
Vettels must be uh gittun scaice.
I thess lay 'at I'd haf tuh be drug
Thoo mighty scaice times 'fore I et bug.

Ketch me one uh tham ornerry thengs
An' I'll show yuh "W" awn hits wengs!
Ats fur War! Reekle-leck yit
Pole Beasly'n Little Bill Bly thess fit.
They come tuh town
An' fit all over uh acre uh groun';
What was it they fit fur?
"Thess becaise hit wair Locus Yur!"
Ole Gran-sur Beasly said;
They both laid th'ee four weeks in bed!

I nuvver see uh feller git Locus stung;
But one time, Gran-sur Beasly brung
A heavy-sot man, 'at he thess suppose
Got Locus stung awn thuh eend uh his nose.
Gainst we gut some hot worter bilte
'At feller wair dead an' thess plum spilt.
What stung me? Well I be blamed!
I'm so furgitful makes me 'shamed,
But I reekle-leck
Thet liquor had n't no more effeck
An' pourun worter down my neck! H. W. T.

JACIO.

Does truth live one unending day?
It lives and dies like mortal things.
These spring-time flowers — who shall not say? —
Have blossomed like a thousand springs.
For every Age, Truth grows new wings.
What time she cold and silent is,
She tries new voice and softly sings
Within her bursting chrysalis.

Does thought fly onward from its birth?
Ah, no. It tries a little flight,
And flutters downward to the earth
To perch among its leaves at night.
And words of beauty, words of might,
Each day are newly said and sung,
Unwitting that their strength and light
Grew on them while the world was young.

Does Love outlive both Death and Time?
It passes like the southern wind;
It pleases like a jingling rhyme,
But leaves no slender thread behind
That might the past and present bind.
It comes like a faint smell of flowers,
That calls up memory to find
Something we threw away, when ours.

21 W

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